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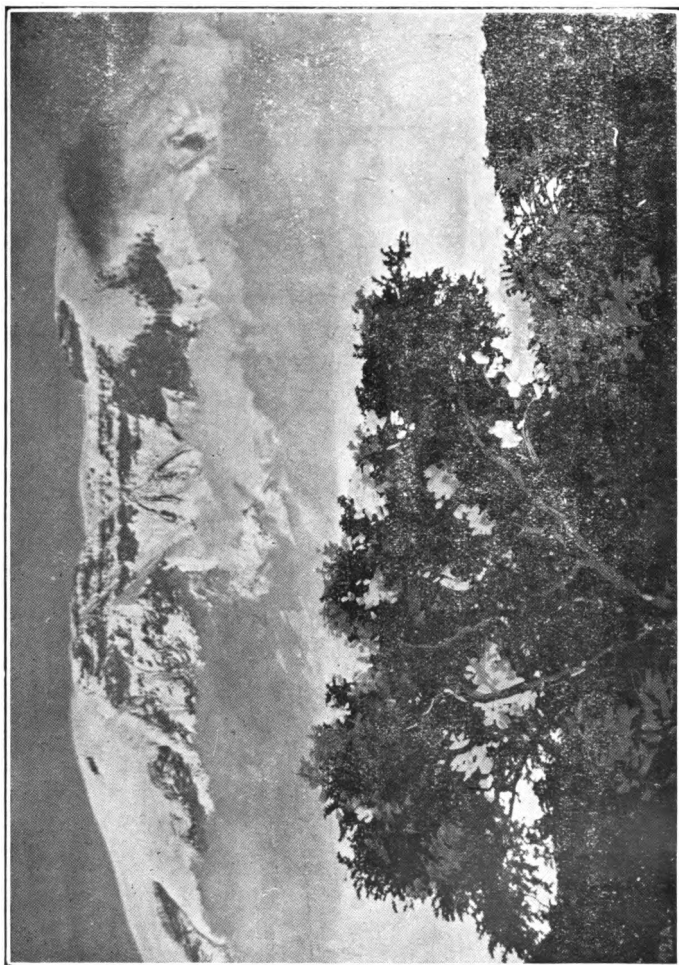
**Experiences of a Gunner
in the
East African Campaign.**



By **F.C.**

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TO THE MEMORY OF
S. G. D.,
TRUE FRIEND AND GOOD COMRADE ON MANY A SAFARI,
WHO DIED AT MOROGORO, EAST AFRICA,
WHILE ON ACTIVE SERVICE,
THESE PAGES ARE DEDICATED.



Kilima Njaro.



On Safari

**Experiences of a Gunner
in the East African Campaign.**

By F.C.

J. C. JUTA & CO.

CAPE TOWN.

JOHANNESBURG.

PORT ELIZABETH.

EAST LONDON.

1917.

FOREWORD.

In this little collection of purely personal experiences will be found neither any attempt to write a history of the East African campaign, nor a record of the achievements of one particular unit. These episodes are merely samples from adventures shared by thousands of others similarly placed, who "stuck it" till sickness or a bullet interrupted their tropical careers.

That the conquest of this vast territory should demand almost super-human exertions and grievous hardships was inevitable. When a brigade is engaged in hundred-mile dashes through jungles and over mountains, or relentlessly follows on the heels of the retreating enemy, heavy commissariat wagons and other luxuries must needs be discarded. The question of whether such privations were wholly necessary, or partly avoidable, seems rather beside the point at a time when the difficulties with which the authorities had to contend are hardly realized, and the tactics employed in hastening the end of such a complicated campaign as yet but superficially understood. Most of those who attested at the recruiting offices fully realized that they were signing on for no mere Sunday-school picnic, but we trusted implicitly in the strategy and genius of our man at the helm; and who will say that trust was misplaced? If there is any particular aim in these pages, it is to show that we took the bad with the good, and generally contrived to find a bright side to every cloud of privation and discomfort that shadowed the path to victory.

Most of these sketches were written on active service in the lulls between months of strenuous activity. But the last pages were penned—appropriately enough—during an attack of malaria while on convalescent leave.

I am indebted to Mr. W. C. West for the photographs of Kilima 'Njaro and the Pangani. My thanks are also due to the Editor of the "Cape Times" for permission to republish "The Pathway to War," "On Safari" and "With the Forward Observing Officer."

F.C.

March, 1917.

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I.

THE PATHWAY TO WAR.

From Cape Town to Kilindini and a Little Further.

Lying on my straw mattress in the training camp, or rolled in my blankets on the hard veld under the stars, I have listened to my comrades chatting away on a range of subjects varying from higher mathematics to the quality of the last bully-beef issue; and I have wondered what particular attraction was the deciding factor in persuading this or that man to answer the call to arms. Patriotism, you will reply, frowning at the bare suggestion that any baser motive could have influenced any loyal son of the Empire in making up his mind to forsake a comfortable bed and regular meal-hours for the very simple and somewhat dangerous life of a private soldier. Duty alone, pure and unalloyed, has brought thousands and tens of thousands flocking to the colours. Duty, combined with an inborn love of adventure, has produced perhaps a greater number of warriors, and these of the very best type. Three shillings per diem, with free rations, a separation allowance for wife and children, and withal a temporarily care-free life, has certainly brought not a few into the fold; while the mere right to wear a khaki uniform with bright brass buttons, and possibly jingling spurs (unconscious at the time of attesting that with this glory goes the privilege of cleaning out stables thrice daily), has been the guiding star of a certain type which usually does—but sometimes, unhappily does not—soon settle down to the fact that there is much of the prosaic daily round and trivial task even in the life of a glittering Lifeguardsman.

A hundred and one more reasons could be discovered, each of them mingled with a greater or lesser proportion of patriotism, that are sending men along to the recruiting offices, some in gladness at escaping their humdrum existence for a few months, some in sorrow at what they

must leave behind, and some who would sooner face a German bullet than the scorn in a girl's eyes.

But there is yet another magnet, one that is perhaps hardly recognised by those whom it is most strongly drawing. This is an age of travel. At one time the monopoly of the wealthy, more recently brought within reach of the less worldly endowed classes, thanks mainly to the efforts of Messrs. Cook, the desire to see as much of the world as possible in a lifetime, has become more and more one of the natural cravings of the modern Briton. This is an age of education, and travel has been acknowledged one of the greatest educators from the days when "the grand tour" was considered the necessary final touch to the upbringing of every proper young man of position. Comparatively cheap though travel may have become, it is still by way of being an expensive luxury to the average working man when indulged in by the hundred miles. Public holiday special excursions from Cape Town to Frenchhoek or Ceres are all very fine in their way, but they don't take you into really foreign lands, where even the true taal spoken slowly evokes no response, or where an English half-crown piece is examined critically and returned without thanks.

During the summer of 1914 how many would-be explorers all over the Empire were not bewailing their hard lots in being doomed to spend their whole lives in the countries that gave them birth? Then came the fateful end of July, and with it the commencement of a war that plunged half the world into a struggle waged in almost every quarter of the globe. Troops were sent from Great Britain to France and Belgium; then to the Dardanelles, Egypt and Greece. Indian soldiers came to Europe, and English regiments were trained in India. In Africa at least half a dozen different theatres of war were thrown open, and in England a ready welcome awaited any colonial who wanted to see his Motherland in the excellent company of whichever brigade he chose to join.

Here then was the great opportunity for the man who hitherto had perforce done his globe trotting by means of the map and circulating library. Everything was provided for him—free passage, free meals, free clothing; no worry about tickets, luggage or hotels; no need to

ponder over where to change or how much to tip porters and stewards. Absolutely everything really necessary was supplied by a generous Government, which only asked of a man in return a few simple services, such as perfect discipline, reasonable care of his rifle or horse, and some attention to his own person and development—all very excellent virtues whether working for oneself or one's country.

To South Africans three great chances have been given : To go overseas, which may mean service in various parts of Europe, or haply Egypt or Mesopotamia. The second chance was to serve under Botha in the territory formerly known as German South-West Africa, while the third opportunity for seekers after pastures new lay, of course, in the present campaigns in German East and Central Africa. Thousands have taken part in at least two of these expeditions, and more than a few have managed to participate already in the three.

I went through the South-West campaign and saw much of the country from the coast to the capital, and from there to the end of the northern railway—and of the enemy's resistance—at Otavi and Tsumeb. Many other pens have described the campaign and the country, the horrors and humours of both, the hardships of trekking through the desert and the softness of life in a deserted—but well furnished—private residence at Swakopmund. It was not a holiday I should ever have contemplated in normal times; none the less it was a trip I shall never regret. The fascination of the shifting sand-dunes skirting the coast; the uncanny loneliness and wonderful sunrises of the Namib; the unbelievably blue mountains and rainbow sunsets we watched from Karibib; the stupendous wireless station at Windhuk, and the keen, clear, winter air of Northern Damaraland, were experiences a hundred times worth the long days and nights spent in the saddle, occasional spells of short rations, and the general discomfort attendant on waging war in a hostile and waterless land. Victory came before we had had time to become sated with the endless prairie of grass and thorn-bush, and as we lay resting at Otavi-fontein during the final armistice we almost felt that we had conquered a land of rivers and corn and fruit-trees;

for there a crystal spring wells out of the limestone, gurgling down a broad furrow to a swimming-bath (blessed sight to us who had the dust of 200 dry miles in our skins), and thence to irrigate a rich vlei of mealies, lucerne, and green barley. A week's recuperation for man and beast, during which time the authorities were graciously pleased to arrange terms of surrender, and then we turned our thoughts and faces homewards. We had earned a fair meed of glory by our rapid trek from Karibib to the North; we were told it was almost unique in the annals of warfare as a lightning stroke. I can only assure an admiring public that we knocked several hours off our record on the return trip. Cape Town, home and beauty called even louder to us than had the slender hopes of the enemy putting up a final great struggle when cornered in their mountain fastnesses. Xenophon's harassed remnants can hardly have cried "Thalassa, Thalassa!" with greater joy than did our commandoes when the surf of Swakopmund once more broke through the mist in front. The old bell-buoy off the pier, whose tones had seemed to grow more and more funereal as the weary months after our first occupation passed by, now sounded as joyous as a wedding—or dinner—bell. Even Walvis Bay, that treeless, sandy waste, appeared to us a town of considerable beauty.

As we lay at our ease on board the good ship "Galway Castle" with hot baths and three big meals a day not forty-eight hours ahead of us, we unanimously decided that we had suffered more terrible hardships, and altogether had been greater heroes, than any others of our contemporaries, and had practically won the war for the Allies. We resolved, however, that we would never, never again join the army.

The day following our landing at Cape Town Docks, some half-dozen of our number were found aboard the mail-boat leaving for England. They told us—somewhat sheepishly—that they were really only going home to see their relations, but might possibly join something later on. I heard afterwards that most of them had volunteered within a week of reaching Southampton. Others tasted the joys of home life at the Cape for a few weeks, and then quietly flitted overseas. It took some a month

or two to find out that G.S.W.A. had meant only a very small bit for a healthy young man to undertake in the great struggle, while older men were taking almost wicked risks with their families, in order to fill places in the fighting line.

Our own little party of six had met for the first time at Wynberg Camp, sailed together for the South-West, and finally dined in immaculate evening dress a few weeks after the return—feeling almost shy at the first sight of each other in the splendour of civilian raiment. The dinner had been proposed one day over a lean meal of “bully and biscuit,” and we had derived great comfort from the recitation of the dishes proposed for the menu of this great feed of the future, and from the thought that when the feast materialised we would have done with war for ever. As it happened, however, our dinner was more in the nature of a farewell to three of our number than a thanksgiving peace conference. Two of our little party obtained commissions in England—one of whom has since gained a decoration for gallant conduct in Flanders. Another joined the ranks of the first infantry brigade to sail. A fourth is now a naval lieutenant, while here sits their scribe in a reed-thatched “banda” of mud and sticks somewhere in East Africa. Yet a more unwarlike sextet could hardly have been found less than two years ago.

I think most of the men recruited at the Cape for this campaign were as glad to hear that their training camp would be Potchefstroom as were the Transvaalers disappointed at not being sent to beautiful Wynberg. Those of us who had spent three of four months at the latter camp in preparation for G.S.W.A., and knew every pine-tree and sparrow within bounds, had no desire to repeat the old life in the old place—ideal spot though it be. Potchefstroom was new ground to us, and held all the charm of the unknown. Those who were looking for a complete change found all they wanted. We left Cape Town sweltering in an Indian summer, and turned out of our railway carriages at the Transvaal end in the dark hours of a cold and frosty morning. In a week's time we were breaking the ice in our horse-troughs and besieging the quartermaster's stores for a third blanket.

The humours of life in a training camp would fill a volume of their own. The amenities of segregation in bungalows; the early efforts of the riding school; the awful deeds of self-destruction performed by embryo gun-crews; the incongruities of sentries, sergeants and subalterns; the caustic sarcasm rolling off the ready tongue of an exasperated instructor—are these not written in the weekly pages of “Punch” and “London Opinion”?

Came a day when the joyful news of a move forward was announced. There was not quite so mad a demonstration as when we heard the same tidings at Sir Lowry's Pass in January, 1915, for then we had almost resigned ourselves to spending the next ten years in perfecting our battalion drill in the mornings, and guarding the gates of Wynberg in the afternoons and nights. Nevertheless, we did feel very grateful to the kind gentlemen who arrange these matters, when we heard we were off. There had been disquieting rumours about a cessation of hostilities in East Africa, and we were anxious to get some of our own back on the riding instructor by seeing something that was forbidden fruit to him, what time he was merely and ingloriously thinking out new epithets to hurl at those of our contemporaries in the school who happened to have picked out the least steerable and most obstinate mounts.

There has been much written of women's work in the war, and I can vouch that the ladies of the Transvaal are doing their bit whole-heartedly. Three trainloads of troops left Potchefstroom with us, and for every man there was a cup of tea with cakes or sandwiches before he entered his carriage. Previous to leaving, the members of the local Comforts Committee distributed at least one packet of cigarettes and some matches to each soldier, officer or ranker. At Braamfontein there must have been a thousand-gallon tank of the most delicious coffee ever brewed waiting for us, and the buns and smokes were as the sand of the sea in number. At every station of any size along the line we received similar attention. Nor was Natal to be outdone, for at Maritzburg, where we stopped for an hour at 2 o'clock in the morning, we found a Ladies' Committee and such comforts as are welcomed by the traveller in the early watches.

What memories of the past that day's run through Natal recalled. As we passed close to Majuba Hill and gazed on the little groups of graves round Colenso, Spion Kop, Ladysmith and the dozen other historic battlefields, I think even the gayest hearts among us felt that the presence of those great dead made the ground on which we stood holy. It was here we first heard the tragedy of Lord Kitchener's end.

Much as we of the Cape would have liked to see something of Durban's fair city, this pleasure was deferred for the return journey, and we were confined to the precincts of the wharf. The good people of the place, however, were determined we should not lack for hospitality, and our ship suffered a continuous bombardment of oranges, bananas, naartjes and pineapples from the shore until we were out of range. The Indian hawkers must have had a record day. One coolie, infected by the spirit of generosity, was observed recklessly hurling bananas in the direction of the boat, and was only brought to his senses by a coldly calculating and most unattractive spouse. An able-bodied seaman, however, returning from the hotel opposite, ripe for doughty deeds, insisted that the good work should continue. The woman still being of an opposite opinion, our sailor ally found it necessary to part her and her basket. The scene was worthy of a film, but whether it would have ended in farce or bloodshed we were left to guess, for a civilian stepped in and tendered full value for the goods, and peace was restored.

Replete with our orgy of fruit, we cast off our links with Union territory, and steamed out into the open sea, to the cheerful strains of "Auld Lang Syne," rendered by an Anzac brass band on the jetty. The ocean was calm and merciful, and we did not insult the good folk of Durban by casting their gifts overboard.

Life on a troopship is easy if somewhat congested. Occasional inspections, parades and Swedish exercises, together with various guards, are the extent of duties aboard. Hostile submarines not venturing so far south, excitement is scarce, and has to be supported by games, but in a greater degree by the scramble for sleeping places on deck, which begins immediately after tea, four hours' sitting on blankets in the outer air being prefer-

able to the prospect of a night spent in a hammock down on the stuffy troop-deck. Early to bed and early to rise was the order of the day, but we found these virtues considerably easier of achievement than at Potchefstroom, for the weather was mild and sunny, without being uncomfortably tropical.

Although the voyage is but a short one, we were not sorry to see land again on the morning of our seventh day out. The gates of East Africa were certainly in striking contrast to those of the South-Western Protectorate. After the inhospitable sands of Walvis Bay, the verdant entrance to Kilindini harbour came as a refreshing surprise. One is reminded of the wonderful lagoons described in "Westward Ho!" or "Treasure Island." Through a channel so narrow that it seemed impossible for a huge liner to find depth sufficient to float, our boat wound its cautious way. Forests of cocoanut palms cover one shore, whilst on the other stands Mombasa surrounded by all sort of weird and beautiful equatorial trees. We could hardly tear ourselves from the deck for ten minutes' breakfast, which speaks much for the fascination of the scene. Seventeen months before we had spent a whole day at anchor, with only the cheerless sand-dunes of Damaraland to feed our gaze. Now, when we were quite willing to stand for an hour or two admiring these new wonders, a speedy disembarkation was the order, and off we tumbled into the large lighters and were towed ashore.

Ex Africa semper aliquid novi, but we had certainly never hoped to find a Ladies' Comforts Committee waiting for us, with tea, coffee and smiling faces. With a hurried—or missed—breakfast behind us, and a train journey of unknown duration in front, this hospitality was indeed a kindly thought, and I am sure our appreciation was apparent by the number of times we "came again." As we put down our empty cups we wondered, with some solemnity, where we should find another Comforts' Committee; and at the date of writing we have not found the answer.

Thanks to answering recklessly the sergeant-major's call for volunteers for some labour unnamed, my "half section" and I were left behind to bring along kit-bags. As these were not expected on shore till the following

morning, we seized the opportunity to have a look around, and set out on foot—in view of our inactivity on board ship—for Mombasa. There are little cars that run on rails down the main road, propelled by natives, which can be hired quite reasonably, but we passed these, or vice versa, with scorn in spite of the uncomfortable coastal heat, which causes a European's skin to throw off moisture in an alarming manner.

Mombasa is graced with some good Government buildings, private residences and shops, as well as a Cathedral of oriental architecture. The Indian is, generally speaking, neither poor nor of untutored mind, and fills many important positions. Native labour seems both cheap and abundant, but the average boy did not impress us either as a Sandow or as a restless volcano of energy and action. There are apparently only two forms of vehicle known to them—the iron basin, which represents a wheelbarrow, and a small four-wheeled trolley, manned by from two to ten natives. The man at the point of the pole invariably walks backwards, and the load proceeds to the tune of a short chant of some dozen notes and a “da capo,” kept up till the end of the journey. The first few notes are rendered as a solo by the star boy, and three natives cannot carry a bale up the steps of the wharf without this stimulating music.

The European and modern parts of the town did not tempt us for long, but we plunged enthusiastically into the dark and narrow streets of the native quarter. There was eastern life as one might expect to find it in Bombay or Jerusalem. The majority of imports to this part of the globe come from India, and the absence of duty makes for low prices. We had two cups of tea apiece at an Indian shop (the first effort being altogether too sweet and strong to be considered at all as a drink), and a packet of cigarettes, all for the equivalent of 2½d. Indian coinage, by the way, is exclusively employed in this country, 15 rupees being given in exchange for a sovereign, and 100 cents going to a rupee.

We continued our inspection of the Asiatic at home through what seemed to us miles of dingy streets that would have driven a congested districts commissioner to despair. The Indian has no use for broad streets, as he

seemingly loves darkness, and his windows, as well as being invariably barred, are shuttered and closed. Under any other administration those narrow lanes would, I imagine, have been unspeakably unsavoury, but the British Government does not permit the native to work out his destination altogether according to his own sweet—or the reverse—will.

Mombasa and Kilindini lie on an island, and this fact upsets any possibility of taking one's bearings by the glimpses of water occasionally caught through the palms. We were soon completely lost, so accosted a black gentleman riding a bicycle down a narrow cattle-track, who told us we were walking in exactly the wrong direction, appeared quite cut up about our plight, and offered to guide us straight to the main road. Whether we were wise to accept his services or not we were unable to decide, but I suspect that he, like the London cabby hired by the hour, took us a very long way round in the hopes that our gratitude would be so much the greater. We were beginning indeed to wonder whether he was luring us on to some cannibal cook-pot, when at last a white road appeared through the forest. We reached our base at dusk—hot, hungry, dirty and tired. The salt water off the jetty looked cool and inviting, but we had had our fill of sea water during the week. A neighbouring tap appealed more strongly to us, and by the light of the moon we washed off the dust and sat down to a hard-earned and sumptuous repast of tinned beef and hard biscuits. As we lay under the stars in the cool night air, with the lights of the shipping twinkling around us, we planned a sailing expedition for the following day, a ramble through the palm forests on the other side the day after, and various excursions to cover a week. For some reason, however, we found on the morrow that the port authorities were quite willing, nay anxious, to lose us at the earliest possible moment, and by 2 o'clock in the afternoon of that day we had been coaxed into trucks and sent inland, after a morning spent in sorting kit-bags, to join our comrades.

Our journey towards the interior began like pictures from Livingstone's travels, and terminated in a near

approach to the delectable land known formerly as German South-West Africa.

The view looking back from a mile past the bridge, which connects the inland with the mainland, is unique. To the right lies the harbour, with its shipping and narrow channel to the open sea; whilst on the left the lagoon stretches some miles inland, a smooth, broad expanse of water, dotted here and there with tree-clad islands. Our train was starting its long climb through forests of cocoanuts and bananas, which gradually yield place to rubber plantations and mealie-lands. In a few hours we had passed through the luxuriant growth of the coast belt, and were traversing more open country, with occasional tracts of dense forest, and here and there a large plantation to relieve the wilderness. As we ascended we found the air cooler and fresher, in pleasing contrast to the moist heat of the sea-level.

We climbed steep gradients at a walking pace, and rushed down inclines with a reckless speed that would have blanched the hair of a Cape branch-line passenger. We wondered whether the derailed trucks that lay overturned at the bottom of many a hill were prophetic of our fate, or were merely there for strategic reasons occasioned by a state of war.

In this part of the world trains do not behave as in other countries. For instance, they start from a station with a sudden bound, like a sprinter getting off the mark, and they do the same trick on reaching the summit of a slope. Three men, who thought to show their contempt for our locomotive, were chasing butterflies a few yards from the line, what time the train attained the summit of a hill. They found all the exercise they sought in pursuing the guard's van for three miles, at which distance fortunately there was a station. Unluckily for them, however, there was at their destination a guard-room, into which they were clapped by an unsympathetic officer, who had ideas of his own regarding long-distance races in the tropics.

Our present whereabouts must, for censorial reasons, not be disclosed. Suffice it to mention that we are at a base camp in East Africa. When Kilimanjaro is kind enough to push out his head above the clouds, his snow-

clad summit is clearly and gloriously visible, a fact that indicates we are somewhere within 200 miles of that immense landmark. Of the mountains, of the flowers, the birds and the beasts—from lions to tent-rats—and especially of the insects and butterflies, pages could be written, and no doubt will make unlimited copy for many a journalist who has sacrificed his job to join the army up here. Every day a botanising friend and myself spend happy hours on the veld and in the bush, to the advancement of our knowledge of the local flora, fauna and lepidoptera.

Life in a base camp is a sort of hybrid of paradise and purgatory between the labours of the training camp and the rigours of the fighting line. Our present existence is typically basic, and is divided between eating, exercising and sleeping. Fortunately a wise Supplies Department has arranged matters so that the rations shall be sufficient for our needs, without endangering our digestions by reason of richness or prodigality. There is a Y.M.C.A. hut (locally yclept "banda") where we might over-indulge in tea and coffee; but every 10-cent piece has to be carefully laid out, for the Field Paymaster is an elusive—if not altogether imaginary—official. I believe he merely exists—presuming he does—as a forlorn hope for the impoverished, and we will gratefully back the chance of his miraculous appearance—gold bags and all—for one good mail from the Cape, a longed-for luxury that also seems to have lost itself in the dark interior.

II.

WHERE THE PANGANI FLOWS.

Some Journeys and an Early Morning Ambush.

Although I have got thus far in the German East African campaign—and we hope that is at any rate more than three quarters of the way—without having enjoyed a ride on the broad back of an elephant or scaled the dizzy heights of a camelious hump, nor have to date attempted to bridle an ox, ostrich or any fiercer denizen of the forest, yet there have fallen my way certain wild and wonderful rides. Oven-like railway bogies—shared with thirty-nine others—fly-bitten horses, spare and sparse battery mules, solid tyred motor-lorries, Swahili stretcher-boys—each of the four observing a step of his own invention; all these have I borne uncomplaining. But one eighty-mile journey still stands out in my memory as a dream of misery and horror. It was the last stage before we reached the then terminus of the railway and the beginning of the enemy's country. As frequently happens with military railways in a savage land, there was a trifling shortage of first-class coaches. Frankly speaking, we were on this occasion agreeably surprised to find the kind of tank provided for our accommodation held considerably more than half our number standing up. A genial R.T.O. to whom we pointed out the position told us we were most unreasonable, and warned us that when we reached Flanders we would find double that number in a truck. He also seemed to hint that we had in some mysterious way multiplied ourselves since the rolling stock was ordered.

I am sure none of us had any real desire to sample the roof of the truck until an order was issued forbidding anyone to ride outside. After that, of course, we protested loudly against the over-crowding within. We suddenly saw a vision of wondrous beauty and comfort in the black, rounded iron roof, and longed for its dusty

company. No "Little Grey Home in the West" had ever appeared more desirable to us. Eventually, after several men who attempted to insinuate themselves onto the congested occupants of the truck had been completely lost beneath the surface, a few of us were given leave to climb aloft. Cheers! I secured a native ladder and up we went. The first truck we tried had such a round and corrugated lid that when we stood upright we felt like unto those acrobats who balance themselves on shiny balls which they propel up planks. The next coach looked slightly more level, and accordingly we crossed over. Nor was the crossing a light matter, for a wide crevasse yawned between the trucks, and by the time we had jumped over, crawled on, and had a look at the river running a good many feet below the bridge on which our train was standing, I felt so giddy that I wanted to lie on my face and clasp tightly what small excrescences grew on the smooth surface of the iron. But my companion, D., had all the makings of an Alpine guide, and before my pulse and respiration were normal up came our equipment and supplies—included in the latter a complete side of bacon and a ham, which we had discovered lying in such unguarded state near the supplies that we wondered whether they were rejected as unfit or merely left out as gifts for lonely soldiers. Of this grave matter, however, more anon.

We had quite a formidable barricade when all our parcels were up. D. said afterwards he had found his little lot most helpful in keeping him on during the night. Mine certainly did their best to push me off, or else lay still and trembling while I clasped them affectionately in my aching arms. While we remained stationary, however, this wall of baggage inspired me with some confidence, providing I kept my eyes off the giddy ravine beneath us. Although the sun beat down on our iron roof unmercifully, we could picture from former experience the misery of those interned below, and we rejoiced in the open, though burning, air. Anyhow, what was a little journey of eighty miles? Four—perhaps five—hours; a conservative estimate considering the continuous downgrade. But hearken, ye dwellers in little dorps on branch lines, who boast yourselves of the tardiness of your train.

services, and take heed unto the wisdom we acquired that day. There is no slowness like the slowness of a tropical troop-bearing train. It takes hours to make up its mind to start. It halts before every bridge and culvert until it can pluck up courage to cross, and then crawls over and stops on the other side for further reflection. It waits at each tiny village while the Indian stationmaster 'phones to every station for forty miles each way to enquire whether perchance another train is setting out to oppose or pursue us. If he can glean some news of a rival on the track, our driver warily lurks at every siding, or creeps nervously to the next station for further news of any movement among fellow rolling-stock.

Our eighty miles were accomplished in something over fifteen hours. At first we rather enjoyed the width of view and general independence of our situation, but towards dusk our train was invaded by some few score Baluchis and Kashmiris, who are by nature mountain dwellers, and stormed our roof like a flock of goats. But finding their presence goat-like in other respects as well, we moved as near the end of the truck as we could without appearing too unsociable.

When darkness covered the land, the circle of our interests became somewhat limited. Birds and beasts and flowers no longer distracted our minds from physical affairs, and we began to realize that our bodies were not really enjoying the cramped and exalted position. Slumber seemed very desirable, but to me horribly risky. D., however, dropped calmly off to sleep—and might have dropped onto the sleepers had not I repeatedly waked him up to utter grave warnings, though he protested that he had slept in more dangerous places—which I do not believe. Personally I had a cold, comfortless and wholly miserable night. Sleep came near enough to torture me with horrid waking-dreams of overturned coaches and thousand-feet precipices as our reckless engine rushed down inclines and round curves. D. slept peacefully—his head against the ham and his back to the mountain goats—waking in the morning as fresh as though he had been couched on a bed of dewy violets. His first remark was that the night had passed all too quickly, but I was devoutly thankful for the light and warmth of the sun

and a change of scenery into sugar-cane swamp and green rubber plantations. Nobody apparently had fallen off during the hours of darkness—which proves that the age of miracles is not yet passed—though a slack telegraph wire that crossed the line had torn off a helmet or two and slightly stretched the neck of the uppermost Baluchi, whom it had caught just under the beard.

At 8.30 a.m. we pulled slowly into our destination, over a line which the Indian Pioneers were still putting down at an amazing rate. Stiff, tired and hungry, we clambered off our roof without shedding any tears of regret, and searched the neighbourhood for some sign of a camp. The Pangani flowed coolly down the vale, and we felt we should like to live somewhere on its banks. But our gaze was directed by a local officer towards the summit of a precipitous, lofty and grass-covered mound which towered above our heads. Thither we were ordered to elevate ourselves, our kit and our rations. There was a kind of track up the hill that would have been very suitable for tobogganing on a tea-tray, but even our Baluchi friends paled at the prospect of making a daily health exercise of the trip. A heavy tropical dew lay thick on everything, and our upward progress reminded one of the fairy-tale about a beautiful princess who waited on top of a glass mountain for the right prince to come along, or the problem of the snail that climbed a pole and slipped down an inch for every two it ascended. Several men sank in a state of exhaustion half way up, and then turned dizzy when they looked down, but I was fresh from fifteen hours training in such terrors and they prevailed not against me.

We reached the summit panting, perspiring and trying to forget we had still to fetch up the bacon and sundry other pieces of baggage. We were also rather shocked to find there was no water laid on to our mountain, the said omittance promising several journeys per diem down to the river. It certainly looked as though we were no longer to be effete dwellers in the plain—thanks to the solicitude of the authorities in placing us above the haunts of mosquitoes and Germans.

That afternoon we chopped down trees (ebony has a most depressing effect on the edge of a service axe),

cleared away grass—together with the snakes that therein dwell—and built little leafy shelters for ourselves. The hill-top was quite a delightful spot in its way, but one was entirely dependent on the valley for one's daily wants, and the thought of the descent and re-ascent was the sword that constantly hung over our heads. Mountaineering is a delightful winter pastime, but we had no earthly use for the Alps in a latitude of five degrees south. Every day some new duties were found for us down below, till life became one long climb. Under the efforts of an ill-starred fatigue party, the path was zig-zagged and steps hewn out of the turf in a praiseworthy attempt to lessen our labours; but the first of these improvements only made the way longer, and on the angular edges of the steps one's slips merely became more painful.

Every morning D. and I bathed among the rocks and rapids of the Pangani, where crocodiles would not preferably lurk, and returned with a ten-gallon petrol drum two-thirds full of water for our day's needs—upheld by a stick through the handle and forcibly dragged, shoved and coaxed up the hillside.

Rations were fairly good, and we had our bacon—at every meal. There was also an issue of rum one night; but our spirits were sustained mainly by rumours of the enemy near at hand, and by nightly preparations for surprise attacks on our lofty stronghold. As might be expected, though, no storming party materialized during our brief tenancy, but there came a day when we did meet this happy band of Huns without invitation or introduction, and then we sighed in vain for the comfortable shelter of our slippery hill.

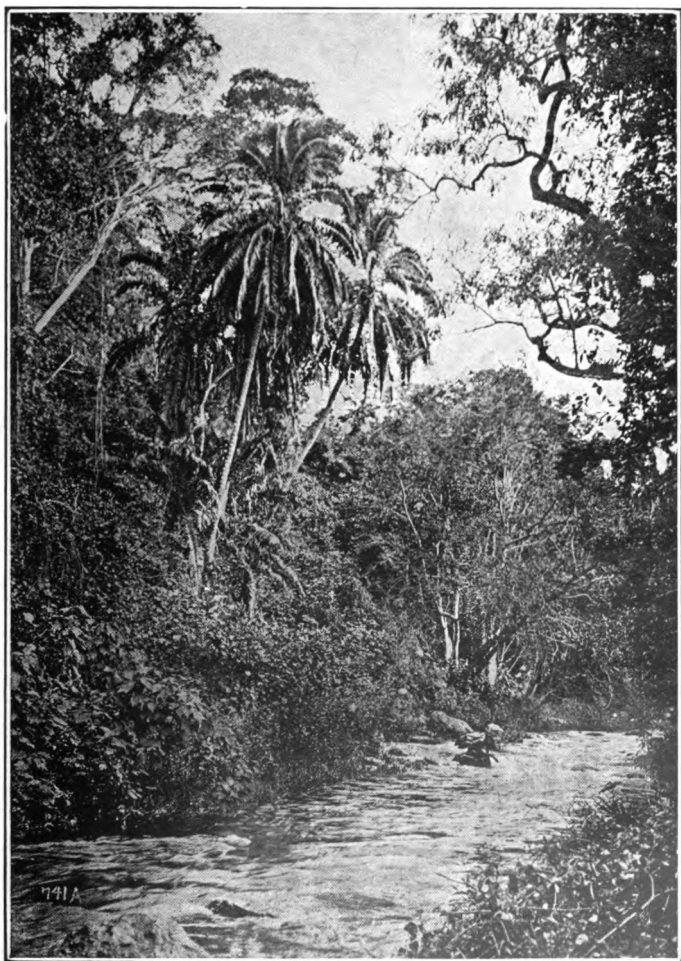
I have more than once mentioned our bacon supply. Like the poor—and certain intimate insect troubles—it was always with us, but the comparison with poverty ends there, for we began to find it far too rich for this climate. We fried bacon; we boiled bacon; we hid it in stews; we bartered bacon for other goods, and we distributed it to our friends and foes impartially. Still the bacon failed not. We took into partnership two genial and hungry infantrymen as reinforcements, and threw away certain portions they suspected of sunburn, and still a large slab remained to mock us. Came a time

when all four of us confessed to a state of horrible biliousness. All that day there was an obvious desire to sit as far as possible from the meat-safe (the uses of an issue mosquito-net are legion), and a frank and unanimous refusal to eat of the accursed animal. The ensuing night was one of horror, and if the Keeley drink cure instils into its disciples such an abhorrence of alcohol as we felt towards the flesh of swine, I can well testify to its efficiency. But this great war is full of wonders, and less than a fortnight found us only too glad to accept a chance rasher or devour a score of greasy "vet-koekies" at a sitting.

Most of our little garrison were reinforcements, ex-hospital cases and various odds and ends trying to get forward to their units. Some managed to secure lifts on motor-lorries, others were retained to guard the hill, but when our turn came it was as escort for a train of mule-drawn supply wagons that we set out. Although we had been expecting an early morning move for some days past, when the order eventually came to get dressed and packed up in five minutes at the unusual hour of 4 p.m., we had a breathless scramble for kits and rations. In the confusion I quite forgot a full tin of jam we had been specially retaining for the march, and the sense of guilt at my sin of omission quite marred the beauty of the first few miles of our trek.

'Tis a long road that has no turning, and a very exceptional one in East Africa. Some of the bends, indeed, were certainly never made for the benefit of the Imperial Government's supply vehicles, and two of our wagons rolled gracefully down the river bank and lay on their backs, with their wheels in the air, obviously enjoying the cool waters of the Pangani after the dusty ruts of the highroad. They stubbornly resisted all efforts at salvage, and to this day there must be many dozen tins of bully-beef on the stony bottom awaiting the enterprise or curiosity of some hungry crocodile.

The leisurely walk in the cool of the evening, together with the satisfaction of being at last on the road to the front, was delightful, and that night we outspanned on a broad, open, grassy vlei bounded by a curve of the Pangani. Here the river was crossed by a solid-looking



Pangani River.

iron bridge, over which an Indian picket mounted guard. Across this structure stretched our path for the morrow. Less than a hundred yards lay between us and the further side of the bridge, yet for most of us the crossing of this Jordan was to be forbidden for many a week to come: some of our number, alas, had passed over a greater river before next morning's sun was high above the mountains. Certainly none of us, as we lay peacefully smoking around the bright camp fires, making pictures in the flames, had sufficient imagination to suggest the surprise that the morning would bring. But by some curious semi-presentiment, as D. and I chose our camping spot under one of the little shade-trees the Germans so sensibly plant, even along the country roads, I made a mental note that there was a shallow gutter running down the side, which might befriend a man in an hour when publicity was to be shunned.

From the tragic note my pen has been sounding you will possibly be preparing for a horrible massacre in the light of dawn. Heaven alone knows why there was not: only a miracle—assisted by extraordinarily bad shooting—can explain the mystery. But we anticipate. At 11 p.m. all fires were as a matter of form extinguished, and we lay for that comfortable half-hour before sleep wondering how many dozen miles separated us from the Germans and the excitement attendant, we hoped, on our first meeting.

Dawn broke cool and peaceful. D. was into the river while I started the fire. On his return I went down to the bridge and had an exhilarating ablution on the rocks. As I finished drying myself I noticed some commotion among the Indian guards—gesticulations and weird noises directed towards myself. Indians are an excitable race, and I wondered whether I was merely shocking them by displaying overmuch of my person during their hour of prayer, or whether perchance the odour of frying portions of the sanctified ox had offended their high caste noses. And my own senses finding nought unacceptable in that scent, I hastened back to our fire, observing on the way some trifling morning manœuvres being conducted by a few infantry sections from our escort. Otherwise the camp appeared very peaceful,

some of the lazier spirits still lying comfortably wrapped in their blankets. We were just wondering what might be the meaning of the liveliness exhibited by the Indians at the river and by the other energetic riflemen, when clear and unhesitating came the answer. From the summit of the wooded kopje that rose above our outspan broke on our incredulous ears the sustained rattle of machine-guns and rifles. In a moment the air was thick with bullets; and the popular sporting piece among the German native levies is an elephant-gun that fires a large, flat-headed, leaden bullet, whose scream, so an Irishman told me, is strongly reminiscent of the Banshee's wail on a stormy night. As we flung ourselves down on the open ground (and one envies a pancake its dimensions on such occasions), I involuntarily compared the old days of cadet corps and volunteer training camps, when even on the most realistic field-days one could always find time to select a soft and thornless spot on which to drop, with our present indifference to aught save flatness. And lying there, spread over the smooth sand, we felt we must surely appear in the eyes of the enemy as a black bulls-eye on a new white target. Then I bethought me of the little ditch that had caught my eye the previous evening, and apprising D. of the fact, we hurriedly crept into its scanty shelter. Now we two, with half a dozen others, were of the Artillery—pilgrims searching the country for our batteries—and to us no rifles had been issued. Although ours was the privilege of lying quietly in a slight depression while a hail of bullets passed harmlessly, but seemingly about nine inches, over our heads, yet the inability to attempt hitting back is a most exasperating sensation. After a few minutes of this fusillade we cocked a cautious and inquisitive eye over our bank, prepared to find dead and dying mules kicking their heels up in every direction. We were vastly surprised to see all two dozen spans standing up, calmly flicking their tails, with only here and there a tell-tale leg, dangling limp and red, to show there was a war on. The machine-guns and rifles persevered, however, and presently a pom-pom and a four-pounder joined in the fray, evidently with the idea of showing the others how it should be done. With the South African Field Artillery the usual prac-

tice is to find the range by sending the first two shells respectively a hundred yards beyond and in front of the estimated distance of the target. The German method of ranging was wonderful; their "bracket" was one of something like two thousand yards. First a shell would fall with a stodgy flop in the bog well to our front. This would be followed by a shriek overhead and a muffled explosion somewhere back among the rocky peaks of the Usambara Mountains. Although their fire could hardly be called effective, the forces of the Hun were producing a horrid din, which was altogether too much for some of our native drivers, who straightway dived for the nearest clump of bush, where they disappear from our story. At this point appeared an officer who evidently was fearful lest the bush contagion should spread into higher circles; for he strode out into the open and there stood undaunted while he ignited a particularly large torpedo-shaped cigar. He was a tall, quiet-looking captain, and the whole performance was most impressive and convincing to any timid ones among our number. I saw much of this officer later on, but never again in the company of a large cigar. This particular one was probably being cherished for the day his majority was gazetted, or for the declaration of peace, and lest his self-sacrifice pass otherwise unrecorded, I here give the heroic deed honourable mention.

Another incident that brightened a few seconds of our morning was the sight of a second officer doubling up to the scene of action as hard as he could, considering he was moving in the most approved bent up skirmishing attitude. Alongside him trotted a big gunner of our party, bare to the waist and carrying his shirt and sundry under-garments; for he had followed me to the river and persevered with his bath till, by reason of the large quantities of lead coming his way, it began to dawn on him that the main objective of some hostile persons, unknown to him, was the iron bridge above his head. A sociable fellow at all times, he was delighted to find himself in the excellent company of an officer of good appearance, though lacking a trifle in stature. The latter gentleman, however, seemed to consider the prominent bulk and colour of our half-dressed artilleryman a distinct menace

and incentive of German hate, and was using the little breath left him to gasp repeatedly, "Scatter! Scatter!" The perplexed face of the simple gunner, as he wondered how on earth a scattering was to be accomplished by two men on a narrow road, was tonic for some of the grimmer sights of that day.

Inspired by these great examples and filled with desisery for the foe, but unable to take an active part in the conflict by reason of our gunless condition, D. decided to forsake the kindly protection of our ditch and carry on with the breakfast. Personally I was not feeling sufficiently hungry to kneel with my back to the foe on top of a bare bank, and attempt to revive a half-dead fire with what might be my last breath, while I offered a most attractive target to the vulgar taste of a Hun sharpshooter. D., however, was at all times an economist, and would not have our half-boiled water wasted on any account. I called him a silly fool in as strong language as I could muster, and he condescended to shift his position so that a three-inch-thick sapling intervened between himself and the enemy. Little severed twigs dropped occasionally into the saucepan, but the coffee was duly made in his own particular fashion, and none of the various processes hurried by a second. I believe ours was the only mess that had a hot breakfast that morning.

By the time our coffee had cooled down, a small but vigorous offensive was being organised against the enemy, and an order had come through an unsuspected telephone wire, from a hitherto unheard-of General, at an uncharted post somewhere in the neighbourhood, that the wagons were to be inspanned and driven back to the shelter of the said fort before any more damage was done. Here was a chance of employment for gunless gunners; so we emerged from our shallow gutter into the glare of the open veld, and first strapped up our blankets and pans ready for the strategic retreat. Then we reverted to the agricultural state from which the war had torn us both, and devoted ourselves to harnessing mules and getting the teams and wagons turned round and headed for our prospective sanctuary. The enemy now became quite infuriated at the vision of his prey flying off with hardly a feather short, and his maxims turned and spat

venomously in our direction. But still the tree-tops were the heaviest sufferers, and the mules stood quietly amused—the most calm and unconcerned beings on the battle-field.

There had been frequent calls for stretchers during the morning, and fortunately our outfit included an Indian bearer with a couple of Swahili assistants. The natural black of the latter had turned to a sickly yellow when the firing commenced, and it took much hard kicking to convince them that the lee side of a large ant-hill was not the correct place for members of their honourable profession when there were groaning men lying about the veld. The first case brought in was one of our Artillery details—a youngster with one cheek and part of a jaw shot away, and in great pain. He and half a dozen of his friends had been curled up half asleep in their blankets when the shooting started. In front of them on a bush was hanging a white towel, left overnight to dry, and this is just the sort of target a machine-gunner looks for when he fires his first burst. This particular marksman seems to have found the bull with his sighter, for towel and bush and men all got their fair share of half a belt. Another of our little party of artillerymen, who had already had his neck grazed by a German bullet in a previous fight, instinctively threw himself flat when he heard the reports. Just as he bent himself to fall forward onto his hands he felt a sharp sting across the back, and discovered later that he was short of a few inches of shirt and most of his skins at the spot where a bullet had brushed him. The process of getting from the upright to the prone position takes considerably less than a second under active service stimulation, so whereas his first bullet had missed his jugular artery by about an inch, on this occasion there was only a fraction of a second between him and a very unpleasant wound. Under these circumstances he can hardly grumble if he was not born good-looking.

One by one the wagons were inspanned, turned and driven off to safety. The way to the fort lay down a straight, white road which must have been practically enfiladed from the German position; yet there was no hurry or confusion. From the standpoint of furious driving the display of our wagons would have disgusted a

Rosebank Show crowd watching the "Teams of Mules" competition. I have come to the conclusion that an East African native is either a very brave or a very fearful individual. It has been mentioned that some of our drivers made a bolt for the bush early in the day, and how certain Swahili stretcher-bearers would fain have tarried behind an ant-heap. But when I call to mind the King's African Rifles charging with fixed bayonets or standing quietly under heavy shell fire, and ponder on the cool, masterful way our wagons were trotted off to the fort, I feel almost ashamed of mentioning the failings of the weaker vessels among the race.

Baulked of their booty, and unsuccessful in their attempt to destroy the bridge, the enemy decided that he was not establishing a superiority and retired. Our small fighting force pursued him some distance and inflicted a few reprisals for our killed and wounded; but the jungle is a bad place for following up a retreating and bush-wise foe. Before noon we were all in the fort, deepening trenches against a possible return of the enemy. At 11 o'clock that night we were similarly employed, but midnight found most of us sleeping soundly. D. and I lay against a bank of earth that had been thrown up when digging the magazine. It was a nice clean spot, but we hoped that any attack would come from the further side of the embankment, for we were naked and overlooked by high kopjes in every other direction. We likewise prayed that high explosive shells would not be dropped into the magazine by the enemy's howitzers. And when the expected night raid eventually came, all our hopes and prayers were realized; but it so happened that we ourselves were elsewhere, more usefully employed perhaps than as gunless gunners burrowing in the jigger-haunted sand. For it was about that time we attached ourselves to a small and remarkable force gathered from all branches of the service, and temporarily employed on a kind of punitive expedition against our recent aggressors. And therein we found much diversion, interspersed with long marches and short rations. But the life was wild and eventful; so for a time, under the guise of infantrymen, we forgot the rules of gunnery and the Morse code, nor did we any longer sigh to reach our long-sought Battery.

III.

ON SAFARI.

A Forty-mile March in the Tropics.

When a midnight call came for volunteers to go—so the Sergeant-Major informed us—to the assistance of a small force in a tight corner, we felt that the moment for doughty deeds had really arrived. At that time we were entrenched on a little hill, awaiting attack by an enemy whose strength and whereabouts were only guessed at, and a moonlight sortie appealed strongly to our youthful imaginations. Similar incidents from the pages of G. A. Henty and Fenimore Cooper occurred to us—none without its glorious termination, and we were just warming to that state of adventurous fervour into which novelists must work themselves before inditing books for boys, when the Post Commandant announced that we could now go to sleep and be ready to start at 9 o'clock in the morning. We gazed sadly and searchingly at the Sergeant-Major, but he only wore his usual enigmatical smile. There is a great gulf fixed between a Regimental Sergeant-Major on active service and the inquiry office of a publicity association.

No gory night assault materialized to keep the flame of our ardour burning, and by the time we were formed up next morning as escort for a hundred Swahili supply-carriers, we were in as thoroughly prosaic a condition as a Cadet corps field-day at Aldershot. The fact that we were sent with only two days' rations (which frequently indicates merely half a day's outing) and no coats or blankets, promised but little adventure. We did realise, however, that we were on a very necessary job—that of conducting provisions up to the firing line in a country where neither railways, motor transport nor mules were available.

In these regions there is always the satisfaction of being able to send a ray of light into the life of the lonely German sniper, as he lies perfectly concealed and safe on some wooded hill, waiting for such targets as we may kindly provide for him when we march along a road, the range of which our sporting friend has calculated to a foot.

There is a certain picturesqueness about a train of native carriers "on safari," which, being interpreted, signifies on trek. Each boy bears on his head a load of from fifty to seventy pounds, the bundles and costumes varying in size, shape and colour. At intervals walk the "head-boys", dressed in white, flowing garments and red fezes, carrying sticks—more as badges of office than as goads, for the torrent of words at their command is usually stinging enough to hasten the lazy and subdue the querulous. The whole outfit wends its snakelike way along the bush paths in single file, a splendid opportunity for a lurking machine-gun. But our respect for such engines of war in Teuton hands had somewhat diminished since the morning two days previous, when we had spread out twelve score outspanned mules in an open field, and allowed the enemy half an hour's practice at close range with a maxim, a couple of hundred rifles and sundry pieces of small artillery. They scored only three hits on the animals—two of these being "outers," as they say at Bisley—and we finished up a kind of military tournament by spanning in the wagons and trotting away to cover, what time the enemy expended belts of valuable ammunition on the surrounding foliage. The whole episode might have been a pure farce had not the first few shots found billets in the bodies of some dozen of our men, two of whom we buried that afternoon. But all the losses had not been on our side, for one of our Indian comrades—who are certainly not lacking in bold spirits—crept up and shot down the two German machine-gunners, and more than one Askari was assisted in his speedy descent from the tree in which he was conducting his target practice with a rifle which fires a large and noisy .450 bullet.

The sniper, however, who hunts singly or with a partner, has proved himself a better shot, and frequently

a great nuisance in a country entirely suited to his methods; and while every true soldier is always delighted to meet a band of the enemy in open fight, the unsociable gentleman who lurks behind a tree, waiting for his helpless victim, is gladly avoided. In our particular case we were denied any attention from either armed party or solitary sharp-shooter on our first day out.

According to appointment by heliograph, our convoy would meet a patrol from the column at 5 p.m. in a native village a few miles from the kopje recently captured by our force. As often happens, however, in a country where maps are not too accurate, and bush-paths wind miles out of the straight line, we had underestimated the distance by several hours, and it was 7.30 and dark before we arrived at our rendezvous, to find no welcoming patrol or any other signs of life, save the wail of some abandoned cur pups in a deserted hut. Three or four miles ahead of us loomed our kopje, but what lay between us and that landmark, or whether the surrounding hills and jungle were occupied by the Germans and their cunning black allies, there was none to tell us.

The village was not an ideal position to defend, and, as we soon discovered, was a most unpleasant spot to spend a night, but for various reasons we stayed there, dumped the loads in the middle of the dorp, packed the porters into two big huts—so that they, at any rate, should not give us away—formed a square round the whole, each man taking whatever cover he could find or make with his entrenching tool, and awaited events. After an eighteen-mile march those who were not on guard laid themselves down to snatch what sleep they could between their watches.

In ten minutes' time every man suddenly realized we were being attacked from all sides by a force of several millions—not of Germans or Askaris, nor yet lions, but by swarms of tiny, red ants. Many of us were sleepy enough to have ignored a man-eating tiger's attentions, but I defy the fat boy in *Pickwick Papers* to have withstood the tickling of thousands of these ants over his face, arms and nether limbs. We tried shifting our positions, pulling the grass thatch from the roofs and lying on that, and a dozen other expedients, all to no purpose.

The ants crept through or over every obstacle we spread between them and our bodies. Soon we abandoned all ideas of slumber, and if the enemy had planned a surprise, it might have been that these insects, like the Roman geese of old, would have saved the citadel by the wideawakefulness they compelled.

Towards midnight the cold began to remind us that we had come away without blankets or greatcoats, and a gentle rain added to the general feeling of comfort and cheerfulness. Fires, of course, were taboo, and it was unwise even to swear aloud, so we could merely sit and scratch and ponder over Solomon's eulogy of the subject uppermost in our minds. What a training ground for sluggards the village of Kombe would make!

After an almost interminable period of darkness, the first grey streaks of dawn appeared in the east, and as soon as there was sufficient light to distinguish tree from man we started forward again, rejoicing to have shaken off for ever—as we then fondly imagined—the dust, and as many of the ants as possible, of that terrible spot. But for three of us a further acquaintance was not far ahead. We had advanced a couple of miles before we were met by a mounted scout, who told us the coast was clear up to the column, and we could march right in. Then came a call for three volunteers—mission unstated. We three musketeers had long since resolved to volunteer for everything—fatigues only excepted—and accordingly stepped out. We were promptly ordered back to the village of irritation, there to await some of the rear-guard who had been left behind with a cable section the previous night. Our instructions were then to remain until the convoy picked us up on its return journey later in the day. The enterprise did not seem to promise much, but we found some green mealies on our way back, and also two small pumpkins, which are esteemed pearls of great price in these parts. Arrived at the village, we made coffee over as smokeless a fire as we could manage, and improved the shining hour by studying the internal economy of a Swahili settlement.

The huts are for the most part round in shape, constructed of a framework of branches filled in with mud, and thatched with reeds or grass. There is generally an

inner chamber, dark as a dungeon, which is used mainly as a kitchen, as far as we could see by the dim light of many matches. This is encircled by the outer living room. Round each hut or group of huts one notices a low fence of weak-looking poles set a few feet apart, on the tops of which is fastened a rustic rail of similar timber some three feet off the ground. At first sight you wonder what useful purpose such a feeble erection can possibly serve, till you are told that this frail fence—which a sick cow could walk over or through without stopping to think—is yet a more effective barrier than iron bars against lions; for beasts of prey will as a rule never pass under a low railing on account of its trap-like appearance.

The huts are dark, dusty, and have a peculiar, unpleasant, musty smell of their own. Nor is the native standard of sanitation very lofty, for the sweepings and refuse of the village are dumped only a few yards outside the boundaries of the colony—a breeding-place for pests of all kinds.

From the summit of a small mountain of goat-guano, which must have taken scores of years to accumulate, we searched the surrounding country through our glasses for signs of the enemy, and were rewarded by the sight of a German officer at the same game on top of the nearest hill. The day wore on, and our rearguard men turned up, but none of our own party came back to relieve us. Our morning hate of the village of ants and odours developed into an afternoon loathing, and we began to have a nasty, lonely feeling that we had been forgotten and forsaken. Nor did that German with his field-glasses add to our comfort. At length we decided to march boldly forward to the kopje whither our comrades had moved that morning.

Hardly had we started when the rattle of rifles and maxims broke out away to our left, and we watched a miniature battle taking place in the valley below us. Whatever glories the conflict may have held at close quarters, there was not much of spectacular interest for us gazers from afar, beyond a mixture of smoke and dust in fairly equal quantities, and we did not linger to hear the referee's decision, but held straightly to our course. Without further adventure we climbed to the foot of the

kopje, where we found a garrison of thirty men; the remainder of the column, with our own faithless party, having sortied out to do battle with the enemy.

The kopje indeed was such a position that one could well believe three-score men would hold against three hundred, yet a small mixed force of British, Colonials and Indians had somehow carried it by storm two days previously, although opposed by a well entrenched band of the enemy with machine-guns and two pieces of light artillery to aid them. The larger of these two latter incidentally changed hands, and a rude piece of boxboard nailed to a tree trunk was the best our men could do at the moment to honour the spot where a Master Gunner of the "Königsberg" fell by the side of the gun he was defending.

We flopped into the soft grass-lined dug-outs, quite prepared to repel any invader of our ease, but in less than half an hour we were kindly but firmly ejected by a sergeant, and led round the side of the kopje, climbing ever up and up. At length we reached a rocky ledge, high above every neighbouring hill, whence one had a clear, unimpeded view to the horizon for three-quarters of the way round the compass, and there we were ordered to dig ourselves in, watch for any movement in the world below, and post double sentries all night. So in the waning light, with knives and odd pieces of iron, we scooped out little ledges among the elephant-grass, and prepared for another fireless night. In the deathlike silence that followed darkness, some huge bird shrieked imprecations on us for intruding on his own particular eyrie, and a big monkey intermittently bounced up and down in a flat-topped tree on our left. I shared the first hour's watch with a man whose lair was too far away for conversation, and the utter quietness was becoming unbearable when the cheery voice of the young lieutenant in charge of the position rang out from below as he made a final round of his pickets. During his welcome visit he told us how the kopje had been taken, and pointed out the precipitous track to the summit, which he had scaled at three o'clock in the morning, what time the main force was engaging the enemy at his front door.

The night passed quietly, and again we were cheated out of a full measure of sleep by the cold, but we had at any rate climbed above the altitude of mosquitoes and red ants. The following day we were allowed to rest in peace, and were given a ration of "ata" meal—the flour used by Indians for making their flat "chapatties." So we cooked and washed, and watched for the wandering bands of Askaris. Two or three more days of the same life would have suited us entirely, but that evening ten of us were told off to escort on the morrow all the available supplies and carriers to the column, which now lay some six or seven miles ahead of us. An early start was imperative, and we spent the night alongside the loads in the long grass at the base of the kopje, where mosquitoes made merry over our unprotected arms and faces. Nor were those the only diversions that night; for just as sleep was beginning to woo us, we were greeted by a most homely sound. The music of a tomcat on the tiles was wafted to our incredulous ears; closer and closer, louder and louder, till a chorus of fifty selected toms from Cheshire could not have exceeded this denizen of the forest in range and volume. At first we all thought it a great joke; but as the beast's progress continued in our direction, its fury apparently increasing, there were some nervous whisperings. The crisis came with a horrible succession of shrieks and howls, followed by a crashing bound through the bushes. Every man sprang for his rifle and the nearest tree, and I do not think there was one of us but expected to hear the screams of an unfortunate victim being borne away. Followed only dead silence; then a reaction of loud laughter from everyone. Perhaps we were lying on the lair of this leopard or wild cat, or maybe his mate had coyly led her lord and master among us as a practical joke. If so, let us hope she received full value for her little bit of fun, and also had her ears well boxed; for our slumber spell was broken for the next two hours, and I, for one, hailed with thankfulness the approach of three o'clock—the time fixed for our departure—as the harbinger of action and warmth.

A great advantage of human transport over wagons and mules is the time saved in making a start. With

the former, one merely wakes the head boys; these in turn kick up the carriers, who pick up the loads alongside which they have been sleeping, and away we go.

Some optimist had told us we should reach our destination after three hours on the road, and so we well might, if we could have flown as the crows and bees are popularly supposed to. A straight line has been described as the shortest distance between two points: well, our line was the other thing. We started by taking a path leading in exactly the opposite direction to the spot we hoped to reach, and occasionally varied the monotony by inclining slightly to the left or right of that line. The moon seemed to revolve in circles round our heads, and once in the jungle we were obviously in a kind of maze, round which a man might walk till he went mad. By some accident one of the guides must have known the secret, for we next found ourselves in vast plantations of sisal hemp aloes, which stretched to the horizon on every side. The man in front of whom I was marching told me that each aloe was worth £5 after five years, so the owner of that plantation is probably the man who is financing the war for Germany.

Six o'clock came, and we were apparently not many more miles from our destination than when we started. Just as we were wondering whether to decapitate our guides for treachery, half-a-dozen natives emerged quietly from the bush, informed us that they had escaped from the carrier press-gang of the Huns, and attached themselves to our force as auxiliary guides and porters. It was eight o'clock before we came on the British encampment, around the residence of a German rubber planter, situated on a hill in the middle of miles of rubber trees. Here we found our original party, camping in comfort, together with a heterogeneous collection of samples from a score of units. There were cavalry without their horses, artillerymen without any guns, armoured motor-car men with no cars, motor-cyclists without their cycles, pioneers without their picks and shovels, and officers attached to no particular regiment. Such was the little force of odds and ends that had stormed a kopje and chased the enemy out of his fastnesses and back to his main army. Dearly we would have loved to stay and

throw in our lot with them for the time, but hardly had we brewed some tea, explored the planter's hall, and remarked on his own talent for water colours and his taste for English sporting prints—which included the Jorrocks series and several sketches by G. D. Armour and Cecil Aldin—before the order came for the whole of the convoy escort to fall in and march back. We of the 3 a.m. start felt somewhat hurt at this announcement, for we had fondly hoped that the greater part of our day's work was done. But orders is orders, no less than eggs is eggs, and colonels and captains cannot always be the fond mothers to us we would fain have them. Fortunately, some worthy native knew a more direct path back to the kopje, and though this was curly enough to break a snake's back, by quick marching we regained the camp in three hours, against the five we had taken over the forward journey. As we toiled up the kopje again in the noonday heat, we felt absolutely at our last gasp, having done not less than twenty miles that morning.

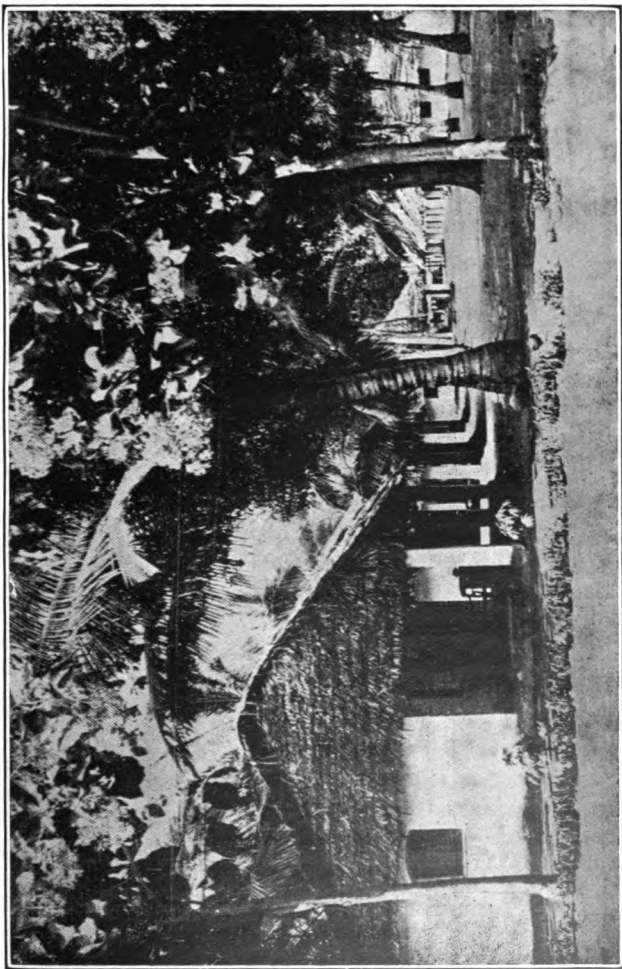
There was nearly a casualty in the last hundred yards, for some humourist shouted out that he believed we were to return the whole way back to our first starting point at the base that afternoon, and we would gladly have shot him had not that deed entailed the cleaning of a rifle, which was too great an effort to be considered. Alas, though, how many a true word is spoken in jest! Barely had two hours passed—and on this sort of life more time is spent in fetching water, collecting firewood, and cooking meals than in real rest—when the order came down that the party would march right back to our base in ten minutes' time. We were incredulous; it could not be done; we should faint by the wayside after two of the twenty odd miles. I believe it was General French in the retreat from Mons who told a remonstrating colonel that he expected his officers to do impossibilities. Some of us remembered that remark and took it unto ourselves for comfort. Besides, in however bad a plight one happens to be, one can generally find some still more unfortunate individual, and although we carried rifles, 150 rounds of ammunition, water-bottles, and bulging haversacks, there were carriers with large loads on their heads, and a small party bearing a heavy stretcher containing a fever-

stricken Cape Corps boy, on their shoulders. To this cortege we had to suit our pace, the resulting rate of progress being between two and three miles per hour.

There were two bright spots in that otherwise sombre march. One was the fact that we somehow avoided, thanks to an alternative route, another sight of the village of ants, and the other was a wonderful display of most brilliant fireflies over a boggy vlei. Beyond that I have little to recall except a discussion on Christian Science with the man behind me, which shortened several of the first miles, and the front sight of a rifle carried by a youth, which hit me in the eye and illuminated the jungle for several seconds with stars of many colours. There was also a swamp where the mosquitoes literally flew at us, and bit hard and often at our knees and faces as we marched along.

Some of those to whom the wish was doubtless father to the thought said we should be in by 9 o'clock, but our native intelligence boys, who are the only true prophets of times and distances when on trek through bush parts, gave us no hope of seeing our blankets before midnight. The slow pace at which we were obliged to proceed stretched the miles out to twice their actual length, but the unkindest cut of all came when half a dozen of us, wearying of this dead march, stepped out till we were a good half-mile in front of the convoy. We had just sat down to enjoy a rest till the remainder came up, when the officer in charge arrived on the scene, administered a short lecture on the sin of any man being more than twenty yards ahead of the main body, and ordered us back to the rear.

When there were still eight or nine miles to cover, feet began to give in. A large percentage of us were cavalry and horse artillery, who had not enjoyed the same route-march training as is meted out to the infantryman, and many would have willingly lain down by the wayside for the night but for the fact that lions are a stern reality in this delectable country. There are some unpleasant tales told of the wounded and weary who have spent a lonely night in the bush, and no one is anxious to sample that adventure.



In Tunga.

The last two miles were reminiscent of the patent medicine series, entitled "Every picture tells a story." After seeing phantom bridges looming out of the trees for an hour on end, the real solid structure at last broke through the gloom, and we halted for the stragglers to come up. Then we opened out into the straight, but the painful procession could hardly be termed a sprint. I can only say that if the effects of the bastinado are anything like what my feet felt, the Allies should insist on the abolition of this form of punishment in Turkey when formulating their terms of peace.

We climbed up the steep path to the fort in silence, bunted up our kits, rolled ourselves in our blankets, and dropped like logs into warm, untroubled sleep. Most of the convoy had marched about twenty-seven miles that day, but ten of us had covered a little over forty miles, having been on the tramp from 3 a.m. to 1 a.m., with very little rest, and carrying our full equipment. More than one of us, wearied of "foot-slogging" in G.S.W.A., had signed on to mounted regiments for this campaign in anticipation of prancing steeds and no walking. "The best laid schemes of mice and men!"

Next day the camp might well have passed for a parade of Chelsea pensioners, feebly hobbling around on two sticks, and unable to get a boot on their feet. There have been armies which boasted that they never retreated. Had the enemy come that day in overwhelming numbers, with 42-centimetre howitzers and poison-gas, we could not have marched back half a mile, and no doubt would quite unwillingly have gone down to posterity as a very gallant and lazy garrison. And now, after four weeks of camp life, of guards and fatigues, of tents and security and semi-civilisation, we long again to be "on safari."

IV.

FROM THE USAMBARA TO THE ULUGURU.

Base-camps, home-fires and a strategic desertion.

How rapid in wartime is the change from romance to commonplace; from the clash of arms in the front line to the click of typewriters at the base camp. In Belgium and Flanders the fields, which a month ago yielded only death and suffering from their tilth, may to-day be ploughed and sown for a homely crop of corn.

In East Africa the tide of war has swept very swiftly over the land, and had it not been that the voracious Germany army stripped the cereals and fruit from every acre it traversed in its retreat, the native agriculturist need hardly have paused for a day in the conduct of his peaceful operations. But the economical Teuton, seeing that the occupation of the small-holder had temporarily fallen on evil days, thoughtfully found him another job; and having chained him by the neck to his nearest of kin, led him away to the honourable profession of portering.

When first we viewed the little fort of K., we were whole-heartedly occupied in a strategic retreat before superior forces of Germans and other barbarians. The fort was then merely a few stone buildings on a small rise, the chief attractions of which were some shallow trenches round its rim. At that time we loved it as a little island of refuge in an unkind land teeming with fierce enemies and wild beasts; but never did American mining-town grow so fast in so few weeks, for one month transformed the place into a Headquarters camp. There was a General who lived in an adjacent villa, together with his staff and their attendant servants and chauffeurs. There was a Post Commandant with various satellites, such as political officers and military police. Then a whose nestful of red-tabbed gentlemen settled down in snow-white E.P. tents along the hillside. Among these

figured an I.G.C., an A.D.M.S., an A.D.S. & T., the Senior Supplies (we have never met the Junior of that family), a Director of Sanitation, the D.A.D.R.T. (affectionately referred to as "Dead Rat" by the telegraph orderlies, to whom he was a great trial), and a dozen more, the interpretation of whose initials remained for the most part a mystery to us. Then at the station, which was re-opened a couple of weeks after our arrival, thanks to the exertions of the Indian Pioneers, there was an R.T.O. and some more Supply officers. A very important gentleman from India, with the simple title of D.R., resided with his native cook in comfort and a nicely fitted up railway coach he had brought with him from his pet line in Southern Asia. By way of compensation for this weight of official lettering, the Y.M.C.A. also put in an appearance and sold us C. & B. salmon and R.F.F. jam.

Thus was K. metamorphosed from an almost uncharted and unguarded mound into a busy, bustling, staff-officer-ridden, General Headquarters Camp. D. and I had entered it on the lee side of a supply wagon, with German bullets wailing over us. Five weeks later we were sneaking out of the place, once more on the shady side of a wagon, praying to heaven that we might escape detection by our erstwhile friends, the British. And lest some may wonder whether the manner of our exodus signified desertion and dishonour, the story shall be told in its proper place.

The first week of our occupation was not without its thrills. One could wander abroad escorting strings of native carriers to one of the fighting forces in the neighbourhood, which was sufficiently sniper-haunted to ensure against ennui. Or, if one was of a more homely temperament, there was a certain amount of cheap excitement to be had from the enemy's night attacks. You manned a trench, fixed bayonets and fired off unlimited ammunition into a hillside that was completely hidden in the gloom, whilst the Germans and their black friends did the same to you. It was a cheerful pastime, and not without its glory if the tale was told impressively enough to friends at home, but safe as shooting driven grouse from behind the butts. After a few days, however, the district was

more or less cleared of the foe, we were retained as a garrison, and life—robbed of motion, bullets and books—began to assume that drab monotony which is, perhaps, the greatest hardship the war inflicts on men imbued with active habits and average intellects. For a little while the *dolce far niente* was rather soothing, but it very soon began to cloy. Of reading matter there was none, and for a few weeks it was neither permissible nor advisable for small parties to wander far from camp. In the adjoining native village one could purchase blue beads, bars of pink soap and black snuff in bottles, but none of these are much use from the standpoint of a hobby. So we sat and talked and thought hour after hour till we had exhausted our conversational repertoires, after which we would lie and listen to others doing likewise.

A number of R.G.A. gunners and Lancashire infantrymen, but lately out from "Blighty," had settled near us, and there was a freshness and dry humour about their talk that came as a breath from old England to us Afrianders by adoption. One Brummagen boy, in whom was mixed the imagination of a Jules Verne with a most convincing trick of oratory, had no difficulty and much delight in stuffing with wonderful travellers' tales a simple Kaffir youth, who divided his time between looking after an officer master, and unofficially grilling meat and boiling mealie-meal for privates of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment. To those who would have us believe that good old-fashioned sport is dying out in England, the following brief but gory description of a stag-hunt will come as a reassuring surprise.

"The stag is hunted," began our soldier impressively, "by men on very fast horses. They gallop at full speed till their horses drop dead; then they mount fresh ones. The hunt continues day and night for several hundred miles, and often twenty horses are used up by one man in a single day. When the stag is tired of running it takes to the sea, the hounds swimming after it, and the hunters put out in boats to join in the chase. They are generally out of sight of land when the stag is eventually killed, and it is then brought ashore and buried in the ground for a year, after which it is dug up and eaten."

"A whole year, baas?" exclaimed the boy, for once almost doubting. Our Lancashire Munchausen evidently realized that this was rather too much for even a simple African to swallow. "Well," he allowed, "the winter is very cold in England, so that the meat is frozen for nearly six months." That decided the veracity of the story for the boy, and we watched his lips moving silently as he memorized this great hunting story (no doubt adding a few embellishments of his own) for his cronies round their camp-fire that night.

An idle life at any time is not conducive to good health and spirits. In East Africa lack of occupation for body and mind is generally fatal. We ourselves had noticed—and men in forces operating with the other advances told us the same thing—that as long as a column is on the move, both men and animals keep wonderfully fit. Halt for two days in a standing camp, and there will be a formidable sick-parade in front of the M.O.'s tent, while horses and mules start dying off like flies. Hardly had the first week of laziness passed at K. before a few men developed headaches and shivers and burnings, which are the harbingers of high temperatures and the hospital. Malaria had begun to claim its victims, and, attributable partly to the human fear of the unknown, men began to sit about and wonder whether they perhaps were not feeling a trifle unwell. Then they would time their pulses and borrow someone's clinical thermometer, and talk gravely over the result with their friends. I honestly believe that several men simply drove themselves into fever from want of some better occupation. Later on in the campaign, when we reached the Rufiji region, neither physical, mental nor medical aids availed aught with malaria, but at K., which lies on the Tanga line, we became convinced that with a little effort in hygienic living and employment for mind and muscle, a man might well retain his health and keep in condition. So when the neighbourhood had been well swept of the enemy, D. and I resumed our peaceful tramps into the surrounding country. And not only did nature reward us with the marvels of her tropical flowers and insects, but we also happened on sundry works of man, such as an abandoned lemon grove, an orchard of pink guavas and a well

nourished pumpkin-patch, all of which gladdened our hearts and served to cool our blood.

One of these walks in particular was a thing of beauty, never to be forgotten. We set out early in the morning for—let me get our object out while we are still on prosaic ground—a vegetable garden situated near the summit of the Usambara Mountains. Lest any should wonder how this garden came there, I will mention that, perched on a rocky ridge and flanked by mighty precipices, stands a German sanatorium, open to every cool, health-giving breeze of heaven. A well-made road leads thither, winding ever upwards in gentle gradients, and wherever a mountain stream has to be crossed, a solid, cemented culvert has been constructed with Teuton thoroughness. That it has been kept in good repair is evident;—there are no yawning chasms or piles of fallen debris due to the washaways and landslips to which mountain roads are ever subject. Yet this is no recent feat of engineering; for green turf and mosses grow softly underfoot, as they do on the hill-paths of North Wales and among the pine-woods of Scotland. Although at the time this track was made it is probable that ox-carts were the heaviest and most rapid form of transport known in these parts, the motor-cars of the adventurous among our officers had no difficulty in attaining the summit—with a few exceptions. We passed one of these latter—and a notable one at that, for its owner was a general—lying in the undergrowth fifty feet below the path where it rounded a nasty bend near the top. That the crew had not escaped scatheless was apparent from a dried pool of gore on the sward. We heard later that an unfortunate Swahili servant had paid heavily for his first joy-ride, but he had been coaxed on to the Sanatorium, where the good German nurses bandaged him up and sent him on his way rejoicing.

As we ascended, the beauty of the scenery became intensified. At every turn some new glory of forest or rock or rivulet was revealed. We would gladly have tarried all day to pluck the gaudy tropical blossoms and revel in the brilliant hues of bird and butterfly; but we forced ourselves to cry excelsior, for our objective (hateful war-word!) was the summit—and vegetables—and we had

only one day's light for the adventure. So we pressed on from silent, creeper-woven jungle into sunny slopes of grass and bracken, and then through green forests of banana, past roaring cataracts half hidden in their own spray, up to the bare, wind-swept crags of the summit. Each phase had a peculiar charm of its own:—the forest with its smooth white-trunked giants, and the clustered columns and moulded arches of another huge tree, which might well have inspired the architect of a Gothic cathedral, and all the shady, perfumed peacefulness of the woods. Then out into the sunny open, to be met by an undreamed-of vista of mountain and plain, plantation and jungle, as far as eye could distinguish. A few miles of the sun and heat and we gladly plunged again into the pleasing coolness and moisture of broad-leaved plants and gurgling streams. Up there, amongst the lonely peaks of the Usambara, the camp we had left behind seemed unreal and the war but a silly myth. We half wondered, as we surveyed our khaki, who we were and whence we had come. And here, in a place where a few acres had been cleared, we found the primary aim of our adventure—long rows of juicy lettuces, white-stalked celery, spinach and parsley, all running to seed for want of gathering. We lunched off some cheese we had brought with us and innumerable hearts of lettuce, washed down with tea that took an hour to make owing to the struggle between our fire and a tropical thunder-shower. After that it was time to collect what spoils we could carry and commence the downward journey.

The days of ease we had been spending began to tell before we were half way back, and forgetting the glories of nature, we became absorbed in an acute realization of hunger and weariness. At dusk we crawled into camp, footsore from twenty-five miles of mountain road, but still bravely hugging our bundles of greenery. And it may have been the exercise we ever afterwards took regularly, or the effect of the clean, keen air we breathed that day, or maybe a diet of much lettuce and little meat, or again merely the fact that we refused to let our minds dwell on unhealthy subjects; but it so happened that while those who had come into K. with us were being carried to hospital in twos and threes daily, never so

much as an ache or pain assailed us while we sojourned in the fort.

Our various homes at K. merit some passing attention. Number one was the hard cold ground behind a trench, but we knew it not long enough for our respect to deepen into love. Number two was originally occupied by some excellent tenants of bearded and fiery demeanour, whose shoulder-straps bore the legend "Jind." These warriors are among the finest specimens that India produces, and in spite of the fact that a constant aroma of frying ghee, ghor and ata becomes highly nauseous, we were proud to have such neighbours, and gladly bought "King Stork" cigarettes from them at four times their value. When, therefore, they were one day ordered forward, and incidentally vacated a ready-made tin shanty, D. rushed in where angels—and those who were wiser in the habits of the Asiatic—might creditably have feared to tread. I, with the superiority born of six months (the first of my life) spent in Bombay, was reluctant to enter before expected supplies of Keating's powder had come in, but the substantial argument of two walls for a shelter from the wind, and a fairly rain-proof roof over our heads, prevailed against the shadow of possible and undesirable little aliens that had once lived on terms of closest intimacy with our friends from Jind. The risk was taken and justified, for we spent three very comfortable weeks in that abode. At the date of our first occupation the furniture was scanty and comforts few, but every day we added some conveniences and decorations to our chamber. Before long we possessed a spring-bed apiece, a table, sundry cupboards and more crockery than we could use, whilst a rude but practical fireplace graced one corner, belching forth clouds of smoke into the eyes of any blue-bottles that contemplated a raid on our meat-safe. How and whence all these good things came, I cannot imagine. I have no distinct recollection of buying, begging, borrowing or stealing a single objet d'art. In such a camp one just "makes" things—which comprehensive and useful verb embraces acquisition by any means from picking up off the road some unconsidered or forgotten trifle, to holding up the hostile and once lawful owner at the persuasive point of a bayonet.

Thus we evolved in the course of a fortnight from primitive dwellers in caves and holes to a condition of manor-housed country squires, bathing and fishing in the Pangani, and taking the air among the foothills of the Usambara. But easy times have their end, and usually a speedy one in the army. One by one the Indian regiments and native troops left the camp for the field, and the duties they had more than sufficed to fulfil now became ours. Patrols, pickets, guards (over objects ranging from German prisoners to water-taps), telegraph orderlies and a score of other daily rounds and trivial tasks were handed over to our party. When we enquired about the prospects of getting forward to our own various units, we were told that no more details were being sent forward. In fact, it began to look as though we were to be settled in this spot for the duration of hostilities,—mere hewers of wood, drawers of water and bearers of telegrams to staff-officers.

The last straw came a little later: the penultimate one was an order that all temporary wood and iron buildings were to be pulled down, after which we would move into a geometrically pitched, dirty-white canvas, regulation detail-camp. Our hearts sank at the thought of deserting our roomy quarters for the twelfth part of a stuffy, ant-haunted bell-tent. At that time I was apprenticed as orderly to the R.T.O. at the station, so I suggested that it would be a fitting and beautiful thought if I were given some dwelling place approximating on the railway. Houses and rooms, however, were in as great demand as at Muizenberg or Sea Point during the height of the summer season. Railway officers and engineering stalwarts occupied even the ruins of a water-tower the enemy had dynamited before they left, and one wild-looking, hairy old Scot actually lived, like a hermit-crab, in a dented and rusty old tank that had toppled over in the explosion.

As I stood in dejection on the platform, the R.T.O. half apologetically pointed down a little branch-line the Germans had constructed towards the river, for the purpose of destroying what rolling-stock remained to them. Fifty yards along this track were three locomotives which had been sent off at full steam and now lay telescoped and

twisted on the veld. Behind these stood the charred remains of what had once been a small passenger coach. "That," said the R.T.O., directing my gaze towards the ruins, "you are welcome to if you can do anything with it." I laughed; it was like offering a dirty and jagged stone to one who craved bread. So I fetched D., and we laughed together. Then we pondered on our prospective twelfth portions of a bell-tent among the ants, and thinking deeply, we approached the gutted coach. It certainly looked hopeless, but so did the chrysalis an hour before the butterfly emerged. At any rate we decided to attempt the feat, and next day, having borrowed four "jumbos" (the colloquial name for an East African native), we transferred the walls, roof, furniture and effects of our tin shanty on the hill to where the skeleton truck lay, and set about building our next home. I will reserve the purely structural details for the Royal Society of Architects, and merely mention that the work occupied the best part of two days. The result, I may state without undue pride, surprised the entire Railway staff as well as ourselves. By dint of much manœuvring before the walls were wired on, both beds were squeezed in, and even then there was room for a table, a cupboard and enough floor space for one man to dress on. The decorative effect of galvanized iron for floor, roof, walls and door, together with the general air of solidity, was worthy of Sir Christopher Wren himself. Such a sanctuary, wheel-high above the creeping things of the earth, and standing, as it were, in its own extensive grounds on the river bank, was compensation for many of our troubles. With this palace to welcome us home every evening, we felt capable of bearing the unwarlike burden imposed upon us for a little longer. Two days had we laboured and done all that we had to do in the transformation of the truck, and the third day we sat down to admire and enjoy the fruits of our work.

Now enter the afore-mentioned last straw. After about half an hour's admiration and enjoyment we were visited by two privates of the Rhodesian Regiment, who explained that they were "B Section" men—i.e., semi-invalided and only fit for light duties—and had been ordered to take over our jobs and our house. At first we treated

this as a rather ill-timed joke by some envious persons. Then, when we saw that these strangers evidently meant to stay, we went over and interviewed the R.T.O. He was sympathetic, but had received instructions from the Post Commandant. We duly applied to that officer, and again our tale of woe was listened to with kindness, but he had orders from his superior that these "B Section" men were to be given work at the Railway Station. No doubt, if we had persevered, we might have traced the matter back to General Smuts, and in due course to the Imperial War Office itself, but we wisely followed up the origin of our supplanters no further than the camp boundaries. It only remained for us to present to the Rhodesians, with as good grace as we could summon, all our furniture and fittings, and retire to the seclusion of a bell-tent shared with ten other men and ten thousand times ten thousand red ants.

Then began a rapid maturing of the plan we had had in mind for many days. I must here mention that D. and I were members of a small party of artillerymen sent forward to join our Battery. After a sharp engagement with the enemy a mile beyond K., the supply-wagons we had been conveying found shelter under the fort, since when we had been given no opportunity of resuming our journey. Meanwhile three-quarters of our number had gone down with fever, and each day we chafed more at our bonds and the refusal of the authorities to allow us to go forward. We had already done a fair share of lines-of-communication and base duties philosophically and without murmuring, but the prospect of seeing the war through in placid safety stank in our nostrils, argue we never so wisely with ourselves on the "they also serve" theory. Last, but not least among our grievances, was the fact that we had received no mail since we left the Union, and in all probability would see none till we had somehow attained the Battery whither our letters were being addressed. While we lived in comfort and tin houses we had restrained our feelings to the extent of running about dutifully with telephonic communications for the great ones, and quietly formulating possible schemes of escape in the intervals. With the last straw came grim determination: the plot thickened every hour,

Now escape from a base camp in the middle of East Africa is no mere play for a child. In the first place, if one is discovered *flagrante delicto*, a court-martial will generally try to make the crime appear tantamount to desertion. It is true that we were only trying to make for our own unit—who would probably welcome us with open arms at a time when fever was taking a heavy toll of men—but against that we were deliberately defying authority by taking matters into our own hands. So we went into the business with our eyes open; in fact the consciousness of guilt became so strong that we began to wonder—and became cheerfully resigned to the prospect—whether we should one fine and early morning stand facing a firing-party over an empty hole in the ground.

In the second place, transport conductors had orders to take no passengers, and were not sorry for an excuse to chase away importunate beggars of lifts. Thirdly, unless one could explain oneself officially and satisfactorily to supply-officers, both at the start and along the road, rations would be unobtainable; for good Samaritans cannot invariably be reckoned on, although we met more than one in the course of our travels.

Here then, when we seemed rather up against the proverbial brick wall, appeared a *deus ex machina* in the form of an old friend of D.'s, installed in a motor-car and dressed with blue tabs and a considerable amount of brief authority in his own particular branch. And him, since he appeared an excellent fellow and trusty withal, we made privy to our conspiracy. So after many consultations, and presents having been exchanged (lemons and guavas on our part, and a hurricane lantern on his), we decided on a plan of escape and wearily waited for the next lot of wagons to return and load up again for the front. In the meantime we overhauled our kits, accumulated supplies, did our military chores with great energy, and generally were on our best behaviour.

At last came "der tag" and in rumbled a mile-long string of dusty and creaking wains. From our point of view it was rather an unpropitious moment to have chosen for their entry, as I was just commencing a 24 hours guard over a pump (from which water-bottles only

were to be filled). This complicated matters somewhat, but by conscientiously allowing the ants to keep me awake all night, and incidentally doing two other men's reliefs as well as my own, I was granted permission by the kind-hearted corporal in charge to spend the following day in bed. But there were affairs of greater import than sleep to be attended to that morning. Already the wagons were loading up and pulling out. Fortunately our truck-house (which we had continued to use as a store-room) was situated conveniently near the track taken by transport, and we had no difficulty about getting our rather extensive luggage on board. Then, after grateful farewells to the good friend who had so generously aided and abetted our enterprise, we slunk along—with emotions alternating between schoolboys playing truant and convicts escaping from prison after murdering their warder—beside the wagons and so out of camp. As we crossed the iron bridge that spans the Pangani we shook the dust from our shoes against the fortress of K., and fervently prayed that we might not be brought back in chains and disgrace three hours later.

All the wagons came to a halt a few hundred yards over the river, which manœuvre pleased us not at all in our anxiety to put fifty miles between ourselves and an unmerciful roll-call. However, no foaming horseman or furious motor-cyclist appeared on the horizon waving a blue envelope; and trekking for two and a half hours that afternoon, we covered eight miles before outspanning for the night. As the darkness wrapped us in its black cloak we began to feel a greater sense of security. Anyhow we would have a run for our money, and decided that if things looked bad we would take the conductor into our confidence (for none had told him what vipers he was cherishing in his well-developed bosom), and beseech him to pack us on top of a load and cover us with tarpaulins to the point of suffocation.

Having conscientiously guarded a pump (from which water-bottles only were to be filled) all through the night before, and after a most wearing day spent in dodging the long arm of military law, I could have slept the clock round without effort. But 3 a.m. is a time of (sic) day beloved of those who journey by road in the tropics,

and we were very nearly left behind owing to the depth of our slumbers. As it was we missed the wagon allotted to us and had to clamber onto one under the charge of another conductor. Nor did we progress far before we were hung up by a jibbing wagon in front. Then our team began to see spooks, and presently the whole line was demoralized into a state of plunging mules, howling boys and immovable wheels, all three being incited to still greater incapacity by a swearing, whip-cracking transport lieutenant. What an object-lesson that trip was to us in the methods and madness of two types of conductor. On the one hand this unreasonable, pig-headed, bullying officer, who would somehow contrive both to start and finish the day's journey in the dark, and yet was always behindhand; whose boys were mostly foul-mouthed, unmerciful brutes, and whose mules were given over to every form of animal vice, never looked sleek, and were constantly being renewed. What a contrast was fat old B——, to whom we gladly retransferred at the next halt. Always calm and sparing with words, but possessing a quiet humour and dignity peculiar to himself, he had his own ideas about transport riding, and a code of unwritten laws that his boys—who were well looked after—understood perfectly. First and foremost he abhorred all noise, undue use of the whip and unnecessary night trekking. All his wagons kept in touch with each other, so that if any one of them had to halt, the wagons in front could be notified and wait till the trouble had been adjusted, or lend a helping hand if necessary. As soon as an outspan was reached, the mules were allowed a roll and then tied to the dissel-booms. No grazing was allowed, but every driver had to cut a good big bundle of grass, and more than one if time permitted. This plan saved both men and animals in a bushy country where a knee-hobbled mule could get thoroughly lost in less than ten minutes. Finally, B—— himself kept a vigilant eye on wagons and teams, to detect the first signs of anything wrong. The net result of this system was the quickest in- and outspanning I have ever met, the smoothest and most rapid trekking, together with the fittest, sanest mules controlled by quiet and contented boys. B—— told me that he had not lost

an animal since he had been on his job, and I can well believe that. He has certainly saved the Government as many hundreds of pounds as the afore-mentioned officer has lost by his high-handed, mechanical methods.

By dusk that second day we had covered twenty-five miles of our journey, and our only fear was that instructions might have been wired to detain us at a large base-camp we would pass through next day. As a matter of fact our presentiment proved correct, for we heard later that a telegram was sent to this place ordering our capture, but fortunately our absence had not been reported till we were safely through. But that we might not grow too proud, the gods that day caused the lid of our tin of golden syrup to fall off as it lay in our "skoff-sack"; and Humpty-Dumpty was simplicity itself in the matter of picking up compared with two pounds of treacle running amok in our luggage, and for many days neither food nor clothes were free of its sweet, clinging influence.

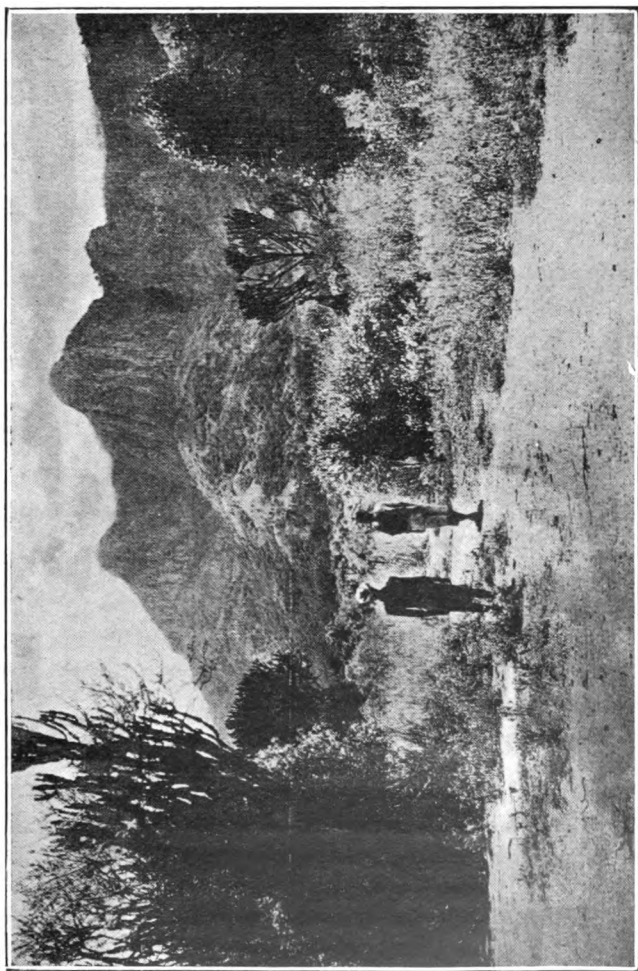
Civilization—our great menace—represented by permanent base-camps, now lay behind us, and we entered a part of the country still infested by small parties of the enemy. We were warned to be ready for snipers at any moment, and passed a big hole in the road alongside which lay the remains of a Red Cross car—the record of a German land-mining gang which had been at work there less than two days back. Unpleasant in their way as these manifestations of Hunnish frightfulness were, we found in them a comfortable sense of security from pursuit. It seemed improbable that the great ones of the land would bother their heads about the elopement of two humble gunners in the area of active warfare.

So day by day we pushed forward along the dusty track that so many thousands of the Union Army have trodden. Once upon a time, in the far off days of peace, this was a model of what country roads should be. The surface, we were told by one who had known these parts under pre-war conditions, was among the best for motor-cars in the whole colony. But a few weeks of heavy, solid-tyred lorry traffic reduced it to fine, powdery dust, and eventually the road had to be closed altogether to vehicles of any description. D. and I used to tramp on

well ahead of the wagons, to escape the dust and perchance attract the snipers, but we failed to attain either object. It was a pleasant and interesting life while it lasted. Off at dawn or a little before, and trek till about 10 o'clock, when there would be a half hour for breakfast—or lunch if one preferred the name. After two or three hours rest we would take the road again and move on until late in the afternoon. Then came the joyful time of day. First of all a wash if water was procurable; then an incredible amount of supper round the cheerful blaze of a log fire. Whatever hunger-pangs were in store for us later, at this time there was no lack of food. We had brought more than ten days' rations with us, and our conductor was good for any more we might require, when once we began to know each other. Times were so good that we almost regretted the approaching end of our journey, when we would return to the hard work, lean living and disciplined routine of Battery existence.

Through forest and desert, over mountain and plain, past rivers and rocks, we rolled on into the unknown and wonderful country before us. Some strange new bird or flower or insect sprang hourly on our gaze. Before we had been on trek two days we were performing delicate operations on our toes and finger-tips for the removal of jigger-fleas. These little horrors burrow unostentatiously into one's flesh for the purpose of making a nest for their numerous eggs, which, when detected, must be carefully removed by means of a needle. The jigger frequently causes a nasty sore and complete lameness for a few days, and more than one soldier has had to have a limb amputated as a result of the poisoning that has set in after a visit from these hardly visible pests. Here, too, I had my first experience of that truly misery-making—and formerly unmentionable—parasite, the human louse. Although I frequently boiled my clothes and soaked them in petrol, I was doomed never to be wholly rid of this scourge till I had left the camps of East Africa for good.

In the daytime we did not see much big game, but after dark lions, hyenas and large wild-cats made the night hideous with their roarings and screams, and on more than one occasion we kept big fires burning all night for the greater safety of the mules and for our own



Usambara Mountains.

comfort. But what a jungle-book was that dust-covered road each morning, as we marched along ahead of the wagons—the first to pass that way since nightfall. Not alone for warring man did the broad pathway exist. Here trod the king of beasts with his queen and two cubs. No mistaking those huge, cat-like pads. On the other side we follow the trail of great and tiny buck for a couple of miles, till it is lost in the spoor of a herd of wild pig. On top of that come the hoof-marks of giraffe, nor has the charge-ahead rhinoceros scorned a ready-made track. Here, too, a couple of elephants have left their heavy impression behind them as they crossed from jungle to swamp. And so on, down to the smallest birds and snakes and weasels, the powdery dust reveals vast volumes of wild lore which he who runs may read, so long as none have passed that way before him with track-disturbing wheels.

And that we might never for a moment forget that there was war in that region of beauty, the road grew ever more noisome with the rotting carcasses of disease-stricken animals. Oxen at first predominated; then, as we entered the tsetse-fly areas, horses and mules lay along the path in daily increasing numbers. Nature's scavengers seem rare in those parts, or maybe they were long since surfeited with the putrid flesh of those tens of thousands which had fallen by the wayside. But there were always enough flies to fill the swollen remains with writhing masses of maggots, and though these are not dainty subjects for table-talk, you will readily believe, gentle reader, they are far pleasanter in the guise of a brief and printed narrative, even on unperfumed paper, than they were to us dust-begrimed soldiers in all their intimate, constant and fetid reality. As we approached the scenes of recent engagements, corpses of Askaris added to the general stench, but the Germans never seemed to leave any white dead exposed, and almost invariably hid any trace of their losses. Frequently they buried them in shallow pits and then lit wood fires on the spot, the burnt ash concealing every sign of newly turned earth. One morning as D. and I sat breaking our fast under a shady tree at a place where two roads met, it suddenly dawned on us that the small mound we were

finding a convenient back-rest had been primarily the meagre covering hurriedly shovelled over some poor fellow, now a bleached skeleton pushing forth its pelvis and a shin-bone in mute protest at such a burial. This sort of tale sounds grim in retrospect, but at the time one is as philosophical about such things as the grave-digger over poor Yorrick's skull. On one occasion, indeed, I was moved to cut off the water-bottle from a dusky and dead warrior who had lain for two days in the tropical heat by the roadside (so there were two good reasons for not attempting to unbuckle straps). At the moment I felt only elation at securing a good German flask; but later, in the quiet of camp, whenever I tried to drink from it, more than one of my senses would revolt at the recollection of that unlucky, sun-bloated victim of war, and in the end I gave the trophy to a grateful messmate who knew not its history.

We had one slight check at a newly formed supply-base, where all transport had to unload. Thinking we should now see no more of our wagons, we rashly reported ourselves at a small detail-camp that grew there, in our anxiety to secure further rations. Our names and numbers were carefully taken, and we were then informed that an order had just been issued forbidding any details to be sent forward. We kicked ourselves hard for our impulsiveness in not finding out first what our prospects would be. For a time it looked as though we were in as bad a plight as at K., and here we would no doubt remain, awaiting our arrest and sentence. But no, we were certainly not going to let our adventure have such a tame ending, after having successfully moved two hundred miles nearer the fun. Fortune again helped those who tried to help themselves. We learnt that our old conductor was trekking on in two days time with fresh loads for the next base—and this time really the last of the ever-advancing series. Those two days were a time of anxious waiting. We avoided the region of the detail-camp as much as possible; and it lay where we least liked it—in a position that guarded both the path to the bathing-pool, and the bridge over which we sincerely hoped to make our escape. However, the visitors' book there was probably an irresponsible sort of record, and

no one seemed to find in our absence a very aching void. So one fine afternoon we unconcernedly strolled out of camp, more or less hidden in the cloud of dust raised by two score wagons and five hundred mules. A couple of days later we were saying grateful and regretful farewells to our kind hosts of the road as they moved off on their final trek to the fighting forces of the Third Division. Our way now lay in a different direction, and petrol would take the place of the slower—if often surer—mules in our last lap to the Battery. We had just crossed the Central Railway line which runs from Dar-es-Salaam, on the Indian Ocean, to Ujiji, the Lake Tanganyika terminus, and the village where the historic meeting of Stanley and Livingstone took place.

M., the little German town in which we were now stranded, had been only two days in possession of the British, and the "entirely new management" was not in very smooth running order when we arrived. The brand-new Post Commandant to whom we applied for food with that confident expectancy the effectiveness of which we had long since learnt, stated that no rations were being issued to anybody. Now a commandant of experience, seeking peace, will make such an assertion without turning a hair, just as though it was as natural to do without food for a month as it is to have three meals a day, and with this type of man it is safest to leave the august presence and seek sustenance elsewhere. But there was a tiny hint of tenderness in our officer's voice—a kind of my-painful-duty-to-refuse-you touch in his words, that made us feel justified in calling again the next day. And this time, instead of hurling an ink-pot at our heads the moment they appeared inside his doorway, as he probably did in similar cases two weeks later, our Post Commandant became quite wretched on our account because there was still no food in the land. The following day a detail-camp sprang into existence, and various odds and ends who had fallen out on the march, or had dribbled in from field hospitals, segregated in a tin store adjoining a mealie-mill. There we dwelt in the midst of bags of meal, mountains of raw coffee-beans, packets of very bad tobacco, bottles of vinegar and piles of English-made writing-pads. On this diet we fared sumptuously until more orthodox supplies came forward.

This was the first real town we had seen in German East Africa, and we found therein much to interest us. As is usual in their colonial dorps, the Germans had laid the place out neatly and conveniently, had put up good, solid Government buildings, and had planted all the streets with several varieties of shade-giving trees. A little river runs swiftly under a bridge in the middle of the town—cool and clear from waterfalls foaming down the slopes of the Uluguru Mountains, on which are perched a monastery, a sanatorium and several comfortable residences—hundreds of feet above the level. Nature and art have both contributed to make the place a beauty spot, but unfortunately neither stopped at that. Nature added fevers and jiggers, and man—German—set up an embryo Woolwich Arsenal wherein he manufactured shrapnel bullets, bombs, rockets and sundry other infernal machines, moreover storing there vast quantities of dynamite, cordite, lyddite, melinite and other items. But news of this industry having reached the Royal Fly-Corps, an airman was dispatched with as much explosive on board as he could carry. In spite of an anti-aircraft gun that had been ingeniously mounted on the railway turn-table, the pilot neatly dropped one bomb in the centre of the munition-works, and the entire establishment subsequently and successfully exploded itself and the surrounding country to a distance of a hundred metres.

There was also a market-place in the middle of the town, where one could buy bananas for a little more than the current price in Cape Town, and cocoa-nuts could be purchased nearly as cheaply as an average shyder gets them at an English country fair. Small tomatoes, too, were to be had for even less than the Londoner pays for the hot-house variety of this wholesome vegetable. And thus the smug native trader was graciously pleased to spoil the Egyptians until such time as the Provost-marshal published a list of maximum prices to be demanded for local produce.

But after a few days it looked as though we were again becoming too rapidly civilized. I spent one morning as a Military Policeman, and having thrice ordered off the railway-station an inquisitive individual who eventually

confided in me that he had himself been appointed to that beat by the constabulary chieftain himself, I determined to adhere to our old and honourable plan of becoming soldiers. Accordingly two afternoons later I obtained leave to board a Crossley car owned by the Aviation Corps and bound for the First Division. I was first prevailed upon to assist in the delicate job of loading her to the brim with cases of German dynamite that had been discovered under a culvert. This stuff had lain exposed to the elements—and particularly the sun—for nobody knew how long, and in the subsequent forty-mile ride over outcropping rocks and foe-felled tree-trunks, I keenly appreciated how poor Damocles must have suffered.

And what of my companion D.? At that time he had been unwell for a few days, and was also crippled by jigger sores, so he decided to await the next opportunity of coming along. I did not like leaving him to the tender mercies of a detail-camp, but he insisted that my chance was too good to be lost, and thought I might be able to arrange for the Battery wagons to pick him up on their way back for supplies. "I'll be up with you in a week's time," was his final assurance, but somehow his words lacked conviction as he spoke. That day next week I was in action with the guns, shelling the enemy from the leafy cover of a forest, with our observing officer on a kopje some miles to the front. The Battery Commander called me into his little shelter of green branches, where a field-telephone was giving him news of the shell-bursts and range corrections. He held out a telegram to me; on it was written "No. 9128 Gunner D. died last night heart failure."

And thus, having gained the Battery we both had striven so hard to reach, I lost the best comrade and loyalest friend man could desire. We had imbibed the old traditions from the same English public school; had lived by the sweat of our brows on the same South African farm; then together we had dragged round trail-eyes and laid onto targets at Potchefstroom, and finally had shared our rations and blankets ever since landing in East Africa. Thus does merciless war and an alluring but life-sapping country deal with friends such as we, taking the one and leaving the other.

V.

WITH THE FORWARD OBSERVING OFFICER.

An Artillery Signaller's Day in East Africa.

Dawn is just breaking as the Battery Sergeant-Major's deep bass grimly pronounces the order, "Turn out and cut grass"—the first duty of the day under conditions where horses, mules, donkeys and oxen derive all their sustenance from the country they traverse. We, however, of the signalling section, are not interested in horse-flesh to-day, and rely on our "half-sections" to keep our mounts fed and watered, the latter operation involving a ride of eleven miles back to the river—twenty-two miles for a drink! But an unkind enemy has held us from the nearest stream for three days, and although water does exist some five miles away, the way thither is such a rough and precipitous one that after one never-to-be-forgotten attempt at midnight, when we first arrived at this camp, the Battery Commander decided that an eleven-mile ride along a more or less high road was better economy. So, although we can expect a strenuous day, we are not sorry to leave our steeds and their attendant troubles behind us in camp.

It would be pleasant to commence my narrative with "After an early but ample breakfast," or some such happy prelude, but we must adhere to sober fact, and we had been doing without rations for some days, owing to transport difficulties. Even a cup of tea was denied us, as the water supply also was temporarily exhausted. However, we are getting broken in to living on hope, occasional charity and perhaps a meal of stewed ox in the evening. So we took along empty water-bottles and haversacks in case we encountered a snowstorm or a heaven-sent shower of manna, or anything that might be thrown our way besides hard work and bullets.

In modern warfare gunnery has lost something of its old-time romance. In the first place it is only on very

rare occasions that the men with the guns see the target at which they are firing. The work of the battery is regulated by an officer who takes up his position on a neighbouring kopje, or up a tree, from which he can see the surrounding country in the direction of the enemy. From there he communicates with the battery by means of signallers, or—the almost universal method in Europe and East Africa—by the field telephone. This entails laying out a cable, often many miles in length, from the battery to the observing-post, every time the guns propose going into action in a different position; and not only has this line to be laid down, but after the battle is won (presumably the enemy are allowed to keep our wire if we lose) it has to be re-wound on the reels—a job that no signaller loves.

The day previous we had laid our line. Setting out at daybreak we had toiled all day through thorny bush, across dongas, and up and down rocky hillsides. More than once we had taken the wrong turning, and had to retrace our cable a couple of hundred yards or so, and had reached the observing-post a little before dusk, to find an Indian Mountain Battery occupying the kopje under a heavy fire, and our observing officer unable to poke his head above the crest without a warm reception from the enemy's machine guns and rifles. He was telling the Battery Commander his troubles on the Mountain Battery-Headquarters' telephone, but our guns did not get much information that day, and the General commanding our Division was none too pleased that evening, judging by certain remarks we overheard him making on the telephone. To-day, however, a safety-pit has been dug for the observing officer, and with his grass-covered helmet he has a good chance of seeing all the sights without catching the watchful eye of the foe.

But to return to ourselves and the dim, hungry dawn. There are two of us to go forward with the observing officer; the expert who operates the 'phone and sends and receives the messages between the observing-post and the battery, and myself, yclept linesman, to repair the cable when broken or cut, and occasionally relieve the man with the telephone from his wearisome job of being constantly on the alert to catch the faintest messages with-

out asking for repetitions. I carry a reel of cable on a belt specially constructed for reeling off from, sundry tools, a rifle, and the usual military equipment, while my companion brings along his telephone and accessories. It is a cool morning, but after the first mile I am outwardly soaked with perspiration, and internally parched with thirst. This is the time when one is tempted to feel utterly "fed up" with the army, and the true philosopher will find much consolation in the thought that this sort of life will only last a few months, and that there are thousands in as bad—or worse—a state of discomfort.

A superficial examination of the line as we tramp along reveals nothing wrong, but as a large portion of the cable has been laid at some distance from the path, we cannot yet congratulate ourselves on the certainty of unbroken communication. And, alack, as soon as we reach the observation kopje and hopefully attempt to call up the Battery, it is evident that there is a fracture somewhere. So, just as the battle is commencing, I hasten back, examining every foot of the line—and it is no easy matter to follow our own cable as it runs alongside two others, all three similar in gauge and colour. Another two linesmen are working the line from the camp towards us.

As I cross an exposed neck a sniper's bullet whistles over my head; but when one is really busy or properly excited, the attentions of the enemy worry but little. Half a mile on I find the cause of our troubles—a very much broken cable. What I cannot discover for some time is the other end of the wire. It is pretty evident that the frolicsome mules of the Mountain Battery, on their way to the water, have wrought horrible havoc with our unfortunate line as it crosses a deep donga. Fifty yards up the further side I find a mournful tangle of wire that has evidently been thoroughly mixed up with at least two legs of a stampeding animal and then disgustedly cast into the thorny bush. As I gaze blankly on the tragedy I realise that we have no spare cable with us, and that somehow or other the mess will have to be disentangled. Any of you who have observed a skein of wool after a playful family of kittens has finished with it will be able to form some idea of the problem in front of me. However, I knew my companion would be hope-

fully and frantically ringing and ringing on his end; and, after all, wire cable is one or two degrees more tractable than wool. So down I sat, and in half an hour had enough loose cable to make the two ends meet, helped by a short cut through the bush, which saved a big angle the original line had taken, and was well out of the track of any respectable mule on its lawful occasions.

Down at the bottom of the donga it was deathly still and hot, and as I stopped to join up my two ends, breathing a prayer that communication was now established between the Forward Observing Officer and the Battery, I encountered a strange phenomenon. As I said, in the donga there was complete calm, and no sounds of the battle reached me, but overhead passed a continuous flight of nearly spent bullets, wearily winging their way like a swarm of honey-laden bees homing at eventide. Probably some distant German machine-gun was being trained onto the summit of our kopje from the plain, and I was standing in the line of fire as the bullets sped their last few hundreds of yards. But there was something weird about this whining flight of pellets without even the faintest of far reports to explain their origin.

Many times that morning had I called down curses on the destructive genus mule, and had I been qualifying for a witch-doctor's degree I should doubtless have acquired much merit from the deed that was now wrought, albeit that it was to my material disadvantage as a linesman. For a party of Punjabis returning from the water with their big mules passed along the path toward the kopje, and as they scrambled up the steep side of the ravine, one big, bony animal stumbled, fell and immediately died, after the custom of this country. The remainder of the string, coming on behind, must needs charge aside from the path towards where my tight-drawn and supposedly invulnerable wire stretched its course through the thorn scrub. But the cable took the strain manfully, and after a series of threats, appeals and strange oaths on my part, and of calm and smiling placidity on his, I at length persuaded the sergeant in charge to roll the corpse off the path and down to the bottom of the donga. Then I toiled back hopefully to the observation-post, to find that our line was at last in order, and had been hard at

work for the last twenty minutes. None too early either, for the day's battle was raging in earnest, and the guns of our battery were making the hills re-echo. The presence of the Indian Mountain Battery was ensuring a fair share of attention from the enemy's artillery, and there had been a few casualties among those who had been doing a little sight-seeing instead of remaining quietly in their dug-outs.

Our observing officer's funk-hole **has not been made** in a very good spot for noting the work of our battery, so he decides to shift some thirty yards to the left, which entails a considerable amount of cable relaying to avoid the induction caused by too much intertwining with other wires or contact with the earth. Just as we are well on the way to the new observation-post—the F.O.O. impatiently awaiting the arrival of the 'phone—there is a shout of "Take cover; howitzer shells coming." But we pay no heed to such pieces of general advice; not without reason have our signallers been dubbed "the suicide club" in Flanders. So while the earth has suddenly swallowed up all traces of other human life, we continue running out our lines as calmly and quickly as we can—for a vacant hole in the ground has suddenly become a very pleasant and desirable thing—what time the shells range nearer and nearer every ten seconds. But before the rocks begin to fly above our heads, the F.O.O. is again giving his instructions down the 'phone, and the cheery voice of the Battery Commander is heard eagerly enquiring the result of each round. "We fancy we've spotted one of their guns down in the village," shouts the F.O.O. "Yes, it's on the chart you have gun's behind the centre hut of the western row Right, I'm ready to observe." Short pause—then from the Battery: "No. 1 fired." A couple of seconds later the sound of the report reaches us. "No. 2 fired," comes up the wire, with the same interval before the report. A quarter of a minute elapses, and then we spot two little puffs of smoke—one well in front of the suspected gun position, and the other some distance beyond. These two guns are merely "ranging" at present. The result is at once 'phoned back, and again comes along the word: "No. 1 fired No. 2 fired." This time one puff of smoke is still rather short,

but the other is only 25 yards out, and a trifle to one side. The F.O.O. can now order the exact range, and adds: "Thirty minutes more right." Up from the guns comes: "One round battery fire, five seconds No. 1 fired No. 2 fired No. 3 fired No. 4 fired." Four white balls of smoke burst at regular five-second intervals, but they are somewhat too high for effective shrapnel fire. "Range excellent," reports the F.O.O., "but burst too high." The "corrector" number is therefore altered, which will adjust the fuse-indicators the matter of an essential second or two. Everything is now apparently in order for the extermination of the German gun crew, but their weapon continues to speak impudently, spitefully, and frequently. Slight alterations in the range are tried, and small switches to right and left. Even a few four-gun salvoes fail to impress the Huns. Our Battery Commander tries all the wiles and subtleties of artilleryship, and finally, after increases and decreases of 25 yards on each gun from left to right and right to left of the battery, the gun is silenced for ever. We found, when we entered the village on the following day, a much-battered and abandoned limber and many graves to tell the tale. Some time afterwards a dismantled gun was exhumed from the back garden of the centre hut of the western row.

The battle continued furiously and noisily all that day. Towards noon the village became too hot for the foe, who promptly set fire to every native hut and a big pile of stores and munitions, after which they moved out in force. So orderly and unconcerned was the evacuation (we heard afterwards that the German Commander-in-Chief was conducting these operations in person) that we could plainly discern through our glasses the Askaris forming up to move off. Whereat the Mountain Battery was filled with great joy, and became excited with that efficiency-increasing excitement which it is unsafe for any mortals other than an Indian Mountain Battery to attempt. Officers, gunners and guns jump about in a manner that reminds one of a group of schoolboys round a brass cannon; but the results are wonderful, and it was a treat to observe the enemy's column scatter and bolt as hard as its feet would carry it for the nearest cover. It is so rarely one gets a glimpse of the enemy, that we were really

having a red-letter day. I have met scores of men who have been through this campaign from the start, and fought in most of the big engagements, without having ever actually caught a glimpse of the enemy, apart from captured Germans or dead Askaris.

The excitement lasted all that afternoon, and made us forget that we had eaten nothing and drunk but little that day. As the shades of evening fell, the battle was renewed with still greater intensity, and when the light began to fail the German army commenced a general retirement. Here was the opportunity for our battery. Round after round of rapid "gunfire" was poured into the retreating troops. Then, as darkness enveloped the land, a long line of bright flashes broke out from the edge of the bush, less than a thousand yards distant, where a German company had lain silent and unsuspected all day, waiting, spider-like, for some unsuspecting platoon to cross the open mealie-lands in front of their trenches. Cheated of their prey, and concealment being of no further advantage, the enemy indulged in a very pretty firework display, and our own machine-guns, stationed along the crest of our observation-kopje, replied heartily, glad to find at last some sort of a target within range. But although, from an æsthetic point of view, it beat fireflies hollow, neither side was doing any material damage, and the fusillade was soon dropped by our side. The enemy, however, was evidently rather enjoying the game, and continued letting off rifles and maxims enthusiastically for another half hour, either with the idea of keeping us up as late as he could, or by way of covering the retirement of his main force.

But our guns have done their work for the day, and we of the observing party may now homeward plod our weary way by the light of a week-old moon, leaving the rifles and machine-guns still aggressively active and wide awake. Ammunition, apparently, is still plentiful with the Germans, for they seldom stint it either for their artillery or infantry. How they have renewed their supplies is well known throughout the army, but thereby hangs another tale.

Some good angels, effectively disguised as privates and N.C.O.'s of the East Lancs. Regiment, gave us a mug of

tea before we started our march, and never before have I so fully realised the stimulating effect of this beverage. We had worked hard through a trying and practically foodless day (to be frank, I had found a begrimed corner of a month-old biscuit in the third search through the pockets of my haversack), and were feeling what is technically known as G.I., or, in the vulgar tongue, "gone in." But a quarter-pint of tea, milkless and unsweetened, restored us to energy and cheerfulness.

We reach camp in time to scent a savoury odour of stewing meat on the still night air, and are soon putting away "skilly" and rice in amazing quantities. I am just sinking into a glorious, deep, postprandial slumber when the sub-section corporal gently (for foul deeds have been done by men too suddenly awakened from their hard-earned sleep by over-hasty corporals) rouses me with the information that I am on gun-park guard that night, and that it is now time to fall in. If bribery could avail anything, I would willingly have squared that corporal with many rupees to be left in peace. But for the most part the army is incorruptible, so out I roll, grope for my rifle and bandolier, and dreamily make my way to the guns. In the lottery for reliefs I draw the shortest stick of the three, which entitles me to first guard, and am soon wide awake again, for the army teaches a man both to sleep and to rouse himself at will. In spite of the fact that only about four hours of slumber are to be snatched on these occasions, it is wonderful how fresh and rested one feels in the morning, even though the order "saddle up" comes before daybreak—which makes me wonder whether the average man does not usually indulge in rather more sleep than he really requires.

The short stick is the best one to draw after a hard day, for the homely buzz of conversation does not die down till after 9 o'clock, and the camp fires look cheerful for an hour or two longer. As I wake my relief man and turn towards my own blankets, the pipe of contentment between my teeth, I feel I could at that moment forgive any clumsy wire-tearing mule—nay, even the professional German cable-cutter. And with such peaceful thoughts, mingled with the echoes of machine-guns and howitzers still ringing in his head, the artillery signaller's day ends.

VI.

TO THE HAVEN OF PEACE.

Of hospital humours and divers diseases.

Thanks to the elevating advertisement methods practised by certain well-known purveyors of fruit-salts, the words of the sophist, "Give me health and a day, and I will make the pomp of emperors ridiculous," are ever before the magazine-reader's gaze. Previous to the East African campaign, not having much use either for physic or for the wisdom of the great relating to hygiene, I fear I did not fully appreciate their significance. More than one other writer has remarked that it is human nature never to value a possession at its proper worth until we lose it. In Europe the war seems, on the whole, to be a great developer of muscle and mind. One hears of thin, anæmic, self-conscious youths whom a few months of hard training have converted into sturdy, efficient officers, feeling a sense of physical and mental well-being they had never previously imagined.

The cry that I heard in every hospital and rest-camp in East Africa was: "I didn't know before what it was to be ill," — "Never had a day's sickness in all my life till I came up here." Now, alas, thousands of the men who helped to conquer this country will rarely know an entirely healthy or pain-free month for perhaps years to come. There is something almost more pitiful than mutilating wounds about the sight of a once stout and powerful athlete reduced by sickness and privation to a puny thing of skin and bone, that might possibly be the reflection of his old self caricatured in a distorting mirror.

Malaria took a dozen different forms, and some of the worst cases looked wonderfully robust in the fever-free intervals, and in consequence received scant sympathy from their fellows. It would be the shivers to-day, and next week a splitting head and burning body. Then

severe vomiting might vary the symptoms, followed in the next bout by universal aches and pains. With every form came a temperature that could hatch eggs; they were all one disease; and there was only one treatment—quinine (in tabloids or liquid, according to whether your luck was in or out).

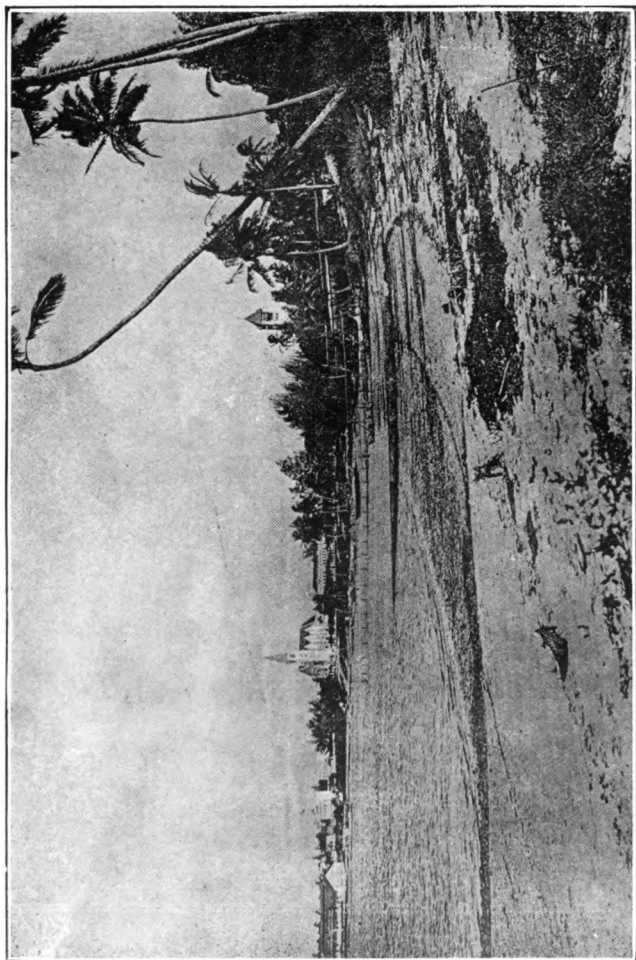
With the majority of men who went through this campaign the hospital played such a leading part in their military career that the Red Cross looms large above their reminiscences. For those to whom sickness came as a novelty the experience was interesting, if sometimes unpleasant. To many, indeed, illness brought a much needed rest, but I doubt if anyone invited fever or dysentery on that account. There were, if the naked truth must be told, cases of fingers and toes that were blown off neither by the enemy, nor altogether by accident, for the sake of a transfer to more comfortable and less dangerous quarters. In an army composed of all sorts there is bound to be a certain amount of "lead-swinging," but I frequently had cause to marvel at the clever way some doctors could almost instinctively pick out a malingerer—to all appearances at his last gasp—from a ward full of genuine, though fairly cheerful, invalids. Of course, there were a few officers who worked on the assumption that every man in hospital was there under more or less false pretences, which was somewhat galling when one not only was feeling horribly ill, but was possibly quite anxious to return to one's unit at the earliest opportunity after convalescence. On the whole, though, the army doctors were unexpectedly sympathetic with sickness and suffering, considering the amount of both that passed through their hands in an unbroken stream month after month.

For many moons I had not felt more than a passing interest in doctors, ambulances or the Medical Service in general, except, in the case of the second, as a possible means of begging a lift. But in this respect the Red Cross was disappointing; for by the Geneva Convention it is apparently forbidden that healthy combatants shall ride in the springy cars that bear that symbol. The East African campaign was certainly fought in accordance with all the laws of international warfare by the British

side. On one occasion, at least, we sent in a lorry-load of medical stores to the enemy at their urgent request, and by way of gratitude, so the story goes, they seized a M.M.T. mechanic who had wandered a little way from his lorry, and held him captive in the German camp until such time as his officer had negotiated for a release. The Germans were reported to possess a wonderful treatment for malaria, which may possibly explain how there is still a vigorous "Army of the Protectorate" in existence, at a time when about eighty per cent. of every white British regiment are no longer fit for active service, and in a district that fairly breathes out mosquitoes and fevers.

Personally, I never took the daily doses of quinine, and frequent doses of other things, which many dwellers in the tropics consider one's only chance of salvation. For a time I believed that a strict observance of the ordinary rules of health, coupled with a serene faith in my immunity from outside evils, would see me successfully through the campaign. But I had not reckoned on the forces that man-made war, leagued with a country intended by nature as a reserve for her own wild children, can muster against the poor soldier from cooler climes. As long as we were constantly in pursuit of the enemy, or the guns were in action all day, one somehow struggled along on little food, incessant work and a few hours' sleep. But when the time came to settle down and watch the foe from afar, while we did grazing guards by day and gun-park guards by night, the black hand of sickness was laid slowly but unmercifully over the Battery. The weeks of hunger, thirst, putrid smells and overwork, aided by a burning sun and the low ground north of the Rufji, began to infect many of us with a bodily weariness and mental langour that simply invited the attentions of any disease-germs that might be wandering past on the wind or in the water. Hitherto our morning sick parade had been a hollow mockery, but now it began to attract detachments that grew larger every day.

Malaria was the disease that chiefly filled the hospitals, with dysentery (my own first selection) a fair second. Cases of blackwater were comparatively few, and enteric still rarer. There was a varied assortment of minor complaints, ranging from toothache to maggot-flies, and



Dar-es-Salaam.

one other malady which was not uncommon, and is probably peculiar to tropical campaigning. Its classical name is unknown to me, but the infirmity was generally and simply referred to as "gone in." It is the retort of outraged nature to sabbathless weeks of grinding toil and constant trekking, unfortified by sufficient food, water or sleep, and its only cure is months of rest and good living.

Shell-shock was uncommon, as the enemy's artillery was incapable of putting up the terrific bombardments affected by their brothers in Flanders; but there were a few cases when for five weeks we lay passively by the river at "Shell Camp," under an irregular but wonderfully accurate fire from one of the big "Königsberg" 4.1-inch guns. With a range of eight miles, and so carefully hidden in the forest that not even our aeroplanes could find it, this weapon was pretty well master of the situation, since in those days we had nothing that could reach much more than half that distance.

My own early experiences of sickness were, I suppose, almost identical with those of hundreds of others similarly stricken. I was not put onto the "light duty" roll, for the Battery was becoming woefully depleted of all ranks. So I staggered about in a state of nauseous misery, unable to eat, and feeling—sometimes, I fear, displaying—a childish peevishness towards my messmates; yet dreamily trying to do a sound man's work for a few more days, with every internal organ protesting against a treatment of two opium pills daily and a diet of bully-beef and biscuit. Eventually, after a night and a day of soaking rain, during which time every stitch of clothing we had on our bodies or in our haversacks became drenched, when I was rapidly reverting to the crawling stage of childhood, I received a note of admission to the nearest field hospital. The approximate direction of this was pointed out to me, and thither I was told to betake myself, my kit and my blankets. So, fondly imagining I was going to a fully equipped ward, and would be back with the guns again in a few days, I lent out various important articles of daily use among my friends, and set off on foot for the hospital. The rain was falling in torrents as I drudged heavily through the mud with my blanket-roll and haversack on my back.

I had been under the impression that I was about as ill as anyone could be till the Battery M.O. asked me to look after a semi-delirious fever case, with a temperature of 105 degrees, who had been sent on a few minutes ahead of me. I caught him up on the further bank of a flooded river, across which we had perforce to wade, the footbridge having been washed away the previous night. How we should have relished that dip a few weeks before, when we were dusty, hot and healthy. But now we shrank from the cold touch of the waters, and shivered as our clothes stuck clammy to our skins. I found the fever case leaning against a kapoc tree in the half-deserted native village, very despondent and weakly indignant at being made to walk to hospital unassisted. Remembering the M.O.'s parting request, I proffered an arm and told my companion not to tarry any longer among the trees. But without gratitude for the arm or the advice, he announced his intention of spending the night in a native hut, and continuing his great trek on the morrow if he was still alive. As it was apparent that he would certainly never make the hospital unless he dropped ballast somehow, I hailed one of the local rustics and loaded our kits onto his hard and woolly head. Then, by the exercise of much bad temper and the small fraction of horse-power that remained to me, I succeeded in coaxing the fever case up the hill, on top of which a tattered Red Cross flag hung wetly on its pole.

In my simple faith and ignorance I had pictured our destination as an abode of spring-beds, white sheets, great rest and contentment. I cannot say how this mirage entered my mind—unless that was affected by fever; for we were right on the battle-front, and separated from the nearest supply base by a hundred miles of almost impassable road, swamp and river. How the Medical Corps could be expected to have materialized nicely fitted up wards out there in the wilderness, I know not. But I never doubted the beds and fittings any more than as a child I had questioned the presence of golden crowns and harps in heaven on account of transport difficulties.

In reality our haven was a small mud house, once inhabited by a Swiss family, to which was annexed a "banda" of poles and grass. On a fine day the blow

might not have fallen so heavily, but as I slopped into the leaky barn, where several very sick and sad figures lay huddled in their blankets on the floor, my heart—already weak—dropped down to zero.

There was a youthful orderly in attendance when we arrived, and to him I applied for some dry clothing. But the small supply had already been swallowed up by the demand, so I curled up in my own wet blanket and resigned myself to whatever fate the gods and the medical service thought fit. After a few minutes the orderly approached with some liquid in a glass. As I had acquainted him with the nature of my complaint on arrival, I trustingly supposed that this drug was one that would relieve me. As soon as I had swallowed the potion loud thunders commenced rolling round my head, producing partial deafness. I enquired of my neighbour what I had drunk, and was told "liquid quinine for malaria." I was rapidly losing faith in that orderly, but thought it well to apprise him of the facts of my case. He seemed surprised when I told him I was there on account of dysentery, and looked up my papers to see if I was not mistaken. "Yes," he said, "you didn't ought to have had quinine at all. Salts is what you want." And he proceeded to the large retort labelled "Epsoms" and filled me a generous tumbler-full. I cannot state exactly the formula of the resulting chemical reaction that then took place in my interior, but I felt nearer death's door at that moment than ever I had under shell or machine-gun fire. After that episode we watched the doings of the orderly closely, lest perchance he should issue arsenic pills, on which our tsetse fly-bitten gun-mules were sustained, instead of "No. 9" tabloids.

But let no-one think that this, my first unfortunate experience with medical assistants, was a fair sample of the class. As a rule these men—on whom one had to rely almost entirely for one's cure and comfort in the hospitals—displayed a wonderful amount of capability, patience and good nature. Their vitally necessary work was as hard in this campaign as any trooper's, and demanded an unsqueamishness amidst unpleasant tasks; a prompt and loyal obedience to abrupt orders by constantly changing doctors in the field, and matrons and

sisters at the bases; and an unswerving devotion to monotonous duties, which would gall the average man beyond bearing. All sorts and conditions of men were taken on for the South African medical services, just as they were recruited for any regiment of the line; so it was only to be expected that there were occasionally square pegs in round holes. One of these was genuinely guilty of the hitherto discredited joke about the nurse who woke up a patient, who was enjoying his first sleep for three nights, in order to administer a sleeping-draught the doctor had thought well to leave that morning. Thus in this war does ancient and overdrawn fiction repeat itself in sober truth.

It is easy now to jest about those long, weary days of illness, but at the time it was no small effort to raise a sickly smile. That first evening at the Swiss house I thought my sense of the humorous had fled for ever, and in my diary for the day I find inscribed in wobbly letters, "Miserable"—the only occasion during the campaign when I was moved to record my mental emotions.

Just as I was dropping into a restless doze—which at any rate helped to make me oblivious of wet blankets and hard floor—we were ordered to take up our beds and walk from the banda to the more rainproof main building. But although we remonstrated almost with tears (for all a thoroughly sick man demands is that he may be allowed to die in peace), we were certainly better off inside the house, where it was dry and warm. Moreover we were laid on the wood and matting couches of the country, which are not to be despised after weeks of mother earth in both her hardest and her most muddy moods. For me, however, it was a night of doubt and sorrow. There were no candles or lamps, and matches had long since joined the mammoth and the dodo. So we lay in inky darkness, with no sound man within call save a wretched Indian sweeper, who hid himself after the manner of his low caste, and slept serenely through our shouts and curses.

Morning brought at least daylight and a visit from the accomplished babu who was acting as chief surgeon, and we were duly dosed and injected according to our ailments. In the smaller field hospitals of the First

Division the babus played an important part, and even if their position entitled them to give orders to white orderlies and patients, and generally lord it in their own departments as only the educated and professional Asiatic knows how, they were usually exceptionally capable and kindly folk.

That day I was allowed to rest in peace, with an unappreciated mug of condensed milk and water by my side. The idea of any sort of a move was unthinkable, and I thanked heaven that I was not as the retreating enemy, who must be in perpetual motion no matter how sick or sorrowful they might be feeling. But if I imagined I was in for a rest cure at that stage, I was sadly undeceived the following afternoon. Front line clearing-hospitals have only a limited capacity, and cannot act as more than mere hotels for a night or two on the road to the big base hospitals. At 2 p.m. the next day I received orders to roll up my blankets and proceed to an ambulance wagon which was leaving immediately for the next camp, fourteen miles back. I protested I could not walk ten yards, so the babu ordered up a stretcher and four bearers, and thus I made my state exit from the Swiss house. Walking briskly in front of me I noticed the dangerous fever case I had brought in less than two days previously. But I had already lost most of my sympathy for him, and reserved it for myself, ever since—after going to bed with a temperature of 105 degrees—he had woken up in the early morning demanding fried steak, which he had duly obtained and eaten loudly and greasily, afterwards smoking a pipe of noisome “jumbo” tobacco under my nose. And that is the merciful part of malaria; though it attacks suddenly, painfully and repeatedly, it retreats with equal speed, generally bestowing a healthy appetite and no particular discomfort. Dysentery is perpetual misery from its depressing commencement to its slow, uncertain end, leaving the sufferer weak, emaciated and bloodless. I had fair samples of both diseases, and though I am facing with philosophical equanimity the prospect of intermittent fever for months to come, I still shudder at the thought of a relapse into dysentery and a diet of milk.

Our chariot was a Red Cross vehicle drawn by six mules, and driven by boys who might have done well on the gun-teams, but whose ideas on the conveyance of invalids were somewhat barbarous. The road was deeply rutted and water-logged after the recent military advance and the heavy rains. The midday sun blazed down on us, and big "blind-flies" bit our arms and faces impudently, whilst every bump and jolt was agony to our bodies, already sore in every joint and organ. The drivers had been given orders not to break out of a walk, and we firmly checked any tendency towards undue haste. Not more than two-thirds of the journey had been covered when darkness fell, and only then did our real sufferings commence. Utterly weary, and aching from the hard bench of the wagon, we fell into holes, climbed the banks of the road, and did evolutions on two wheels at a time, which would have brought fame to any figure-skater. Now and again we would imagine we saw the lights of our destination in front, only to be undeceived by small grass fires and big glow-worms. On two occasions, at least, we all thought a capsizing was inevitable, and half rejoiced at the prospect of a temporary rest from our troubles. Two miles an hour was our average, and just as we were expecting to see dawn breaking in the east, we rolled—limp but thankful—into Tulo at approximately 9 p.m. And there we were made welcome with hot soup for those who liked it, and milk for us to whom all meaty things were taboo. Then we were conducted to large, airy bandas, strewn with clean grass, and were even allowed a lantern till the oil gave out. Ye who lie on spring-beds between perfumed sheets in the hospitals and nursing-homes of civilization, whose nerves are fretted by a heavy footstep on the floor or a horse-hair from the mattress, ponder for a moment on the exigencies of war that drag the delirious from their blankets and the fractured from their slings, to make room for others in still graver straits. But I cannot say we envied you your springs and your sheets; in the first place we felt that nothing could be more restful than those few inches of dry hay; and secondly, by this time we had begun to doubt the earthly existence of such things as real beds, clean linen and neat-capped nurses.

At Tulo we were entirely in the hands of white men—"white" in every sense of the word. Even the Indian cooks, I think, did their best for us, though the Quarter-master-sergeant thought it well to check certain articles of our diet before and after their transit through the kitchen. However, we usually had as much as was good for us, even though there would be an occasional supperless night; for every pound of rations had to be considered in those lean days, when even the hospitals had difficulty in getting their supplies of the essential tinned milk. But there was a good stock of some strange cereal, known to us as "German porridge," the true name of which we were never able to discover.

By some strange freak, I was left for over a fortnight at Tulo, seeing scores of men come and go—some back to the firing line, and many more towards the base hospitals and rest-camps. Quite content to be where I was, I only hoped I should remain there till I was fit for work again, though the idea of saddling horses and climbing lofty observation-kopjes was most repellent. Like Raven Hill's sailor man, I ate and drank fairly well, but a job of work set me all of a tremble. However, I tried to persuade the doctor and myself that I was ready and anxious to return to the guns and glory, but bore up bravely when eventually I was recommended for a few weeks' rest at a base.

Thanks to a diet of great simplicity, plenty of sleep, and the kind attentions of assistant surgeons with imatine injections and drugs, I was more or less cured when I drove away in a small kind of tumbril with three companions. But this was not a through-train, and we were dumped down on the near side of a broad and slimy swamp that had oozed deeply over the road. Here we were transported in stretchers borne aloft on the shoulders of naked natives to the other side. Each boy observed a contour-line of his own in the bed of the swamp, and it was but seldom that any two stood on the same level. We were gladly surprised when we were deposited safely on the further shore—and devoutly relieved, for the waters were stagnant and stinkful. Moreover a 13-foot crocodile had been shot near there the

previous week, which was alleged to have contained certain grim remains of a nigger and two mules.

Having thus emptied us onto the road, our bearers returned whence they came, and we gazed hopefully in the opposite direction in expectation of further transport from the next hospital. Nor were we disappointed; for after an hour or two a few porters appeared and kindly offered to carry our luggage, though it was evident that we ourselves were expected, after our recent dip in Jordan, to continue the journey on foot. So, under the noonday sun, we wearily plodded our homeward way along a steamy road and across a swollen torrent, which had compelled man-handling the guns when we passed that way a month before, in the dry season. The river now happily boasted a foot-bridge, and not far on the other side we found our little Red Cross banda with its genial babu awaiting our arrival.

That clearing-station was a very small affair, and being the only guests, we were made very comfortable and were fed well. But, weak from my recent illness, and burning after the walk in the hot sunshine, I went down with my first attack of malaria that afternoon. The babu's mystic **drugs**, however, assisted by a good night's sleep, enabled me to continue the journey early next morning.

This time we were carried some ten miles by relays of swarthy stretcher-bearers, up that wonderful, winding, forest-flanked road to the spot known as "Summit Camp." Here the Germans had built a large hospital of long, well-thatched bandas, fitted with rows of pole and grass couches which were fixed permanently into the ground along the sides. This is probably never done in the best London hospitals, and is apt to collect not only invisible disease-germs, but also fair-sized specimens of other objectionable insects. Nor would the loudly proclaimed presence of several defunct oxen in the adjoining bush have been tolerated for a day at Guy's, and Bart's might have had a word to say on the subject of sanitation. But who were we to strain at gnats when we had already swallowed so many camels and were yet there to tell the tale.

In this hospital we were under the charge of a young S.A.M.C. orderly who had a real passion for his work

and sympathy with his patients. If I had been a fairy prince or a mine-magnate travelling incog., I should certainly have offered to pay this boy's fees for a first-class medical course, and then set him up as a practitioner in some poverty-stricken slum. One could rest content in the knowledge that the poorest and humblest would not be neglected under his care.

We tarried at the Summit hospital for two days, awaiting transport, during which time I renewed my fever with a splitting head, cold shivers and my record temperature. That night the faint perfume that an army biscuit exudes quite sickened me, but early next morning I was eagerly taking my place in a queue, casting anxious glances towards the quickly vanishing pots of boiled rice. In due course we were wafted on our way once more, this time by a squadron of little "Ford" cars, specially fitted up as light supply-carriers and renamed "Jiggers." There was a fleet of some hundreds of these, and the way they travelled was truly wonderful. The huge lorries of the Mechanical Transport were absolutely useless on this route, and even the splendid Aviation cars wallowed helplessly in the mire and slush. There were times when the commissariat of the First Division was at a rather low ebb, but had it not been for the Jigger fleet, I guess we should have been sharing bundles of elephant-grass with the mules. If by hastening the end of this campaign the cause of ultimate peace has been materially furthered, Mr. Ford, the American manufacturer and pacifist, may well congratulate himself on the success of his little engines of war.

After our recent transportation in stretchers and on foot, our petrol-driven chariots seemed verily to fly—though not quite like birds; for the rutted, rock-strewn earth was always in evidence. But no terrors of the road could dishearten those little cars, and early in the afternoon we reached Mikesse, on the Central Railway, where our chauffeurs dropped us and loaded up again with supplies for the Division.

Our destination was to be Morogoro, which lies about fifteen miles further west along the line. But a train was *rara avis* in those days, and it was only an odd one here and there that had room for a batch of invalids, so

loaded up with cases of rations was every truck running inland. Rolling-stock, as commonly understood, was in fact extinct for the moment on the greater part of the permanent way from Dar-es-Salaam to the interior. The Germans had destroyed practically every locomotive and truck they had been unable to make use of, and had blown up all the bridges behind them. It must have come as a nasty shock to them when they heard we had fixed up temporary supports over the dongas, and were using our heavy motor-lorries, now fitted with flanged iron wheels and a reduced gear, within a few weeks of gaining possession of the line. Numbers of small open trucks, which had been left intact by the enemy as unconsidered trifles, came in exceedingly handy for trailers behind the lorries; and thanks to the railway having been reconstructed a few years previously, with the idea of avoiding long curves and steep gradients (at the expense of bridging rivers and blasting cuttings), many of the enemy's worst specimens of destruction were more or less easily avoided by laying rails on deviations afforded by the old track.

The medical men at Mikesse sent down some buckets of coffee during the afternoon while we waited at the station, and later in the day they invited us up to the hospital for the night. Here we could choose between a cement stoep and a gravel path for a couch. We were not offered any supper, but we could hardly take offence at that omission, as most of the hospitals apparently thought that any feeding of convalescents between the hours of 4 p.m. and 8 a.m. savoured of that gluttonous habit known as "eating between meals."

There was some grumbling among us because we were made to sleep on the cold floor while over the way there was a nice, clean German banda, containing fifty-four soft, yet empty, beds. I arose early next morning after a comfortless night, determined to examine the deserted banda for myself. Everything looked clean and cosy; so, full of righteous indignation, I returned to my comrades and told them what we had missed. But hardly had I opened my mouth when I became aware of a vast irritation in my nether limbs. Hastily pulling up my "slacks", I beheld swarms of tiny fleas—the kind that infest chickens and white mice—with their heads im-

bedded up to the neck in my flesh. In half an hour they were all over my body, face and clothes, seemingly mad with hunger after many meatless weeks. After five days and many ablutions I was still conscious of that "certain liveliness" in my lower regions. Perhaps the frightfulness of that visit to the so-called empty German banda was sent as a lesson not to pry too closely into the seemingly mysterious methods sometimes adopted by departments of the army.

In these field hospitals, where books and papers are as scarce as fresh milk, one relies largely on the conversational powers of fellow-patients for occupation and entertainment. With the constant shifting from place to place, one runs up against quite a fleet of ships that pass in the night. Every day some new type would move in or "evacuate" to the front or to the base. There were thick-set Lancashire lads, whose unquenchable spirits neither sickness nor pain could suppress for long, and dour Afrikanders from the country districts, to whom the British Tommy was something altogether new and incomprehensible. There were quick-witted Cockneys, who made the best of a bad job, but vowed they would never again leave their beloved "Blighty," and lean Rhodesians who had seen most of the world over, and were ready to see the rest, and the war out, whenever their fever would let them. There was a "Z" signaller who had been with the first hundred thousand through the great retreat of 1914, where he was captured by the Germans with six shrapnel bullets inside him. But he had quickly effected his escape back to the British lines, in time to meet several chums who had seen the angels at Mons. There were lads of fifteen and sixteen, and grey-bearded patriarchs, both English and Dutch, all out for the great adventure; an ex-sergeant of Marines who had been on the "Glasgow" in the naval battle at Coronel, and later in the avenging defeat of Von Spee off the Falkland Islands. He carried in his pocket-book a caul, held by him in great reverence, with which he would not part for any money, even to an admiral, since a ship that has a caul on board will not sink. There were one-subject men, who could only talk of women, or rations, or motor-cycles; and an East African museum-curator

whose company was a source of delight to me, an amateur fellow-naturalist. He could name and discourse on every bird, beast and insect, but particularly on snakes—for he specialized in reptiles—and I think the greatest moment the war held for him was when he found a whole room full of well-bottled specimens in the deserted home of a Teuton collector.

In adjoining bandas we had for company Baluchis and Kashmiris, who talked or groaned softly, and when they felt strong enough, smoked hubble-bubbles made of broken bottles and odd bits of tubing, which caused much subsequent coughing and expectoration. Numbers of K.A.R. boys and Gold Coast warriors were brought in too, becoming either very sick or very hilarious, who never tired of fighting their battles over again, though we often wearied of their lifelike imitations of a German machine-gun. Every newcomer had a different rendering of this unpleasant sound, at which he would cheerfully persist far into the night, until our threats or his own comrades prevailed on him to stop.

The naturalist and I journeyed far together, and more than once he invited me to climb the heights of the Uluguru Mountains after specimens. Though fever-ridden and anæmic from months of privation, he was far too enthusiastic a collector to rest for long at a time, so that his existence became one great triumph of mind over matter. At every town and farm he would obtain permission to search for objects of natural historic interest, and would then proceed to convince the authorities that the educational future of British East Africa depended on large cases of his skins and bottles being shipped immediately to his professional headquarters. He was one of the lucky ones who combined war with business and pleasure. We separated at Morogoro to meet once more at Dar-es-Salaam, where he was besieging the offices of the mighty red-tabbed for permission to escort German prisoners to India, and incidentally to view the Bombay museum. His last injunction to me was not to forget to pickle and dispatch every Cape snake I could—figuratively—lay my hands on.

At Mikesse he arose at daybreak to catch the early insect, and employed the daytime usefully in hunting

wasps and scorpions, aided and abetted by me. He even showed great interest in my fleas, which he thought might be something new, and popped a couple into his capacious killing-bottle, where I doubt not they were lost amid the cotton-wool or swallowed in the death-throes of a mantis.

We waited all day in vain for our railway lorries, and snatched what rest we could on the shady side of the house. And this was well, for some Mahommedan festival of the new moon was being celebrated that night in the neighbouring native dorp, and from sunset to sunrise the tomtoms and chanters ceased not from their mournful music.

The following morning we had news of some vacancies on the railway, and soon after midday we boarded a "Reo" lorry and rolled away to Morogoro. Here we found Ambulance cars awaiting us, and in these we were distributed among the various hospitals of that place. Every ward was already filled to overflowing, so that only the very worst cases could find inside accommodation. The remainder of us were allotted a few feet apiece of floor space in what used to be the skittle-alley of the inevitable "Kaiserhof" Hotel, which is a prominent feature of every German colonial township.

My chief recollection of those times is an incessant, maddening, sleep-forbidding itch, that would commence soon after dark each night, and spread rapidly from the insteps of my feet over my whole body. It was as though the ghost of every flea, mosquito, louse and jigger that had ever found disappointment in the shortage and thinness of my blood was now returning to torture me and avenge its broken eggs and slaughtered young ones.

The skittle-alley, round which a chilly, dust-laden wind was constantly howling, did not altogether agree with us. One day, in fact, I was promoted to a locally-made bed in an inner chamber of the hotel, artistically draped with a mosquito-net. There were severe rebukes for any patient in the wards who was bold enough to sleep without his net securely down, but since no protection was provided for the dwellers on the stoep, I presume they were considered sufficiently strong to fight the mosquitoes on equal terms.

I spent a nice, restful afternoon on my newly acquired couch. At 7 p.m. an orderly brought round a large bucket of milk, the sight of which increased my pulse to ninety; for in the skittle-alley it was etiquette to suppress any unreasonable craving for the fruit of the cow (or of Nestlé & Co.) we might experience between afternoon tea and breakfast time. Feeling more contented and at ease than I had for many a long night, I prepared myself for a sound, ten-hour sleep, though I had a presentiment that the conditions were too good to last. I was hardly surprised, therefore, when, just as I was nearing dream-land, I became aware of somebody shouting my name out, and having been thoroughly awakened by an orderly, I was requested to hand over my bed to a patient newly arrived. Thus I returned to cold boards and outer darkness; and if there was no actual weeping, I can vouch that night for some gnashing of teeth.

In spite of their numbers and size, the Morogoro hospitals soon became mere clearing-stations; for the sick were pouring in by the hundred. Some were sent up north to Mbuyini and the other great bases of British East Africa; some were given a few weeks at a local convalescent home up the mountain; but the majority were sent along the Railway-line to recently opened hospitals at Dar-es-Salaam. Among the latter class I was listed, though no-one let us into the secret till 2 o'clock in the dark hours of one morning. Maybe this incident was only another of those holy mysteries of organization to whose wisdom we should unquestioningly bow, but at the time it seemed a little unkind to chase fifty unprepared invalids out of bed with a haste that could hardly be exceeded in a desperate night attack, and then to cart them off to the railway-station at 2.30 a.m. for a train that eventually rolled up at 9 o'clock. In half an hour, however, most of us were calmly sleeping on the cement of the platform as though our slumbers had never been rudely broken, and at 7 o'clock we freely forgave every object of our recent wrath, when large pots of steaming porridge arrived by motor as peace-offerings from the hospital. Thus fortified, we loaded kits and ration-cases onto the trucks, clambered on top, and rattled away towards the east and the hope of a real rest.

But like Bunyan's pilgrim, our progress was a slow and hesitating one. You would think that any normal motor-lorry would have appreciated the change from sandy, rock-bottomed roads to smooth and level rails; but ours displayed not the slightest gratitude. With the exception of the steering-gear, which could hardly lead flanged iron wheels astray, the whole gamut of automobilious troubles was run through by our own lorry or its fellows in front. After one of our bearings had developed a temperature that would have astonished even an East African doctor, we were shunted into a siding and transhipped onto the next arrival. This proved quite a flyer, but could never let itself really go, on account of the motor in front developing recurrent engine trouble.

The chief objects of interest along the line were the bridges the enemy had dynamited. Over most of these they had then run surplus rolling-stock; and one broad, deep ravine, which formerly a fine iron bridge had spanned, was now a solid, tangled mass of trucks, engines and coaches from bank to bank.

Soon after dark the leading chauffeur dropped his spanner, and a general hunt for this was organized, during which a blackwater case, half crazy from twelve hours of vibration, seized the opportunity to slip off and crawl into the bush. By some divine guidance both the man and the spanner were recovered, and we continued our journey by the illumination of millions of fire-flies drifting past on the wind towards the west. It was nearly midnight when we reached the station where we were to sleep, and flung ourselves down among stacks of supplies, too weary to be tempted seriously into a clandestine investigation of cases which bore such honoured and half-forgotten names as Mackonochie, Morton and Cadbury. Next morning we bathed in the Ruwu—here a broad, peaceful river, unrecognizable as the foaming mountain torrent our guns had crossed a few weeks before, when far in the interior and hot on the track of the German army.

For the final stage of our journey we were once more introduced to real, reliable locomotives and bogey-trucks; for between us and the coastal terminus there were now no more lightly-made temporary bridges to be crept over

catlike even by empty lorries. So with a speed that seemed almost reckless we dashed through jungle and plain, with a salt breeze from the sea blowing towards us in faint whiffs. It was dark before we entered the groves of tall, regularly planted cocoa-nut palms, and saw the twinkling lights reflected in the calm water, which heralded our promised land of rest and plenty, Dar-es-Salaam—"The Haven of Peace."

Here several large hotels and commercial buildings had been converted into hospitals, and our eyes were dazzled by the sight of iron beds, clean linen, and a galaxy of matrons and nurses. We were issued with a complete hospital kit, given a cup of hot cocoa with unlimited bread and butter, and were then quite ready to sink to sleep in glory and the first suit of pyjamas we had known for many months of khaki-clad nights. As I slowly and tantalizingly inserted myself between the cool sheets, I told my neighbour that the shock of so much comfort all at once would be too much for us; and sure enough, next morning I was in a raging—but short-lived—fever.

Even at Dar-es-Salaam, where at any rate there was no lack of housing accommodation, the medical authorities were hard put to it to cope with the number of sick that streamed in from every brigade. Where hundreds had been anticipated, thousands materialized and somehow had to be dealt with. As soon as a case was more or less convalescent he was sent off to the Detail Camp, which grew rapidly from a few rows of tents till it covered many acres. This camp was situated among the cocoa-nut palms that skirt the lagoon, and was as good a place as could be found in the district, possessing the advantages of dry soil and a fair amount of shade. But somehow we did not thrive on ordinary army rations, cooked by our own efforts on whatever odd pieces of fuel the tides were kind enough to wash up. So there was always a circle of men walking into the camp by road and returning to hospital by boat.

The nerves of the enemy must have suffered considerably when the British warships were bombarding Dar-es-Salaam, and there was plenty of evidence of German respect for big guns. In the town it was everywhere apparent that our sailors had carefully and accurately

discriminated between buildings of military significance and purely residential houses. But where they had hit, the blows had been hard, straight and, in some cases, often. In the Detail Camp, not far from one of the "Königsberg" gun-emplacements, lay a British naval 12-inch shell which had fallen in the soft sand without exploding. Emanating from a gigantic mango-tree, the Germans had erected a lofty observation-tower of creeper-woven branches, rustic in appearance and constructed on the same plan as the U.S.A. navy's trellis-work masts. If the above-mentioned shell was a sample of the sort of missile that hurtled about the observers' heads, they must have greatly rejoiced when the order came for the evacuation of Dar-es-Salaam.

In the centre of the town an enormous bombproof had been dug for the civilian population. A dozen or more layers of heavy rails had been criss-crossed as a roof, and above these several feet of earth lay heaped. The interior was divided into several chambers, all furnished and fitted with electric light.

In the land-locked lagoon, replacing the pirate schooners and Arab slave-dhows one's imagination so easily conjures up, lay a trim "Woermann" liner (her engines crippled), and another boat of Teuton origin, now only showing her keel and a few plates above water. On the under side, hiding its blushes in the cool sand, is painted a large red cross. Once on a time this symbol had boldly faced out to sea, guaranteeing peace and safety to the German officers who found thereon an ideally situated signal- and observing-station. The British fleet, having good reason to doubt the presence of invalids or any other hospital properties on board, offered to send a medical officer along for a friendly investigation into the omittance. But no suitable reply having been concocted within the specified time-limit, a couple of large shells were dispatched to fill the vacancies in the pseudo-hospital, and as the ship rolled over, the seagulls noticed that no red cross had been painted on the landward—and now uppermost—side.

In addition to the daily drawing of rations and cooking of food, there were two main interests in life at the Detail Camp. Nearly everyone either was waiting to have

his fate decided by a medical board, or else lived in daily expectation of a ship homeward bound. For some time after the medical "boarding" one remained in agonizing suspense; for the decision of that grave and business-like committee of doctors was not received for a week or more after their inspection of one's heart, spleen, eye-lids and other variable parts of the anatomy.

I have read in many newspaper accounts of visits to military hospitals how the only thought of every man lying there was a speedy return to the dangers and discomforts of the front. This is a beautifully imagined idea, but in most cases both unlikely and untrue. Nearly every one of us, I think, was prepared to return cheerfully to death and disease in those poisonous swamps if the sacrifice were needed and we were considered fit. But to pretend that the men whose boarding papers bore the legend "For the Union" were called the unlucky ones, or to assert that the "Return for duty to unit" soldier—who had perhaps already endured two years of it—skipped for joy like a young ram when the news was broken to him, is too much like gilding refined gold and painting the lily. A large proportion of discharged soldiers from East Africa have rejoined the ranks for Europe; for it is wonderful how a month's holiday will change one's views on life in the army. But during those weary days of waiting for transport, weak with disease and depressed by the monotony, anyone who pretended he had not had his fill of warfare for a lifetime was treated by his fellows as a dangerous case of sunstroke.

The city of Dar-es-Salaam had a certain amount of entertainment to offer us. There was fairly cheap fruit to be bargained for at the market-place, provided one rose early enough, and in the little Indian curio-shops elephants and walking-sticks of ivory and ebony could be purchased at four times their normal value. A few Greek restaurants re-opened in our honour and supplied good coffee and very bad tea at twenty-five cents a time, served in cups of extraordinarily thick porcelain. The native quarters and the bazaars were as typically oriental as were the great white hotels and offices of the sea-front typically modern German colonial.

The Paymaster, hitherto as elusive as the Scarlet Pimpernel, now became a sober, living reality who was willing to pay out seventy-five chips at a time (all in German 1-rupee pieces), so long as the rats had not eaten your pay-book, and your account with the Government was not already overdrawn. Sea-bathing there was too, in the clear, warm waters of the lagoon, and fishing was practised by some of those who possessed great patience and could hope for nothing with cheerfulness.

But in spite of all these local attractions, a large section spent most of the day, half the night, and all their cash over the "Crown and Anchor" board, or speculated in a card at the less ruinous game of "House." And when the encumbering weight of silver rupees had been sufficiently lightened, men would sit in their tents and discuss past, present and future grievances. It is curious how at the actual time when rations are short and marches long; when water is scarce or stinks, and the enemy takes to the stoniest roads over mountains; there is seldom a word of complaint to be heard from the greatest grouser in the regiment. But months afterwards, sitting comfortably in the shade, and satisfied with good things, every detail of the bad days is recalled and embellished. And should you consider that your own burdens have been even more grievous than those of the man who for the third time is telling the company his personal history, for heaven's sake don't say so. It is the greatest insult you can offer a soldier at the end of a strenuous campaign, and he will argue with you till you are convinced that your existence has been that of an over-fed sybarite in comparison with the dog's life led by his own brigade.

But it was to the sweetness and comforts of home that our thoughts—if not our talk—most often turned. And there came a great day when we answered several roll-calls, and drew new "clobber" fit for the gentle eyes of Durban, and packed our kit-bags with ferocious joy, praying for a respite from the attack of fever that came due about then. Followed a day of more roll-calls and false alarms, and then, on the usual army instalment plan, we moved from camp to town, from town to wharf, and so, by lighter, to the good ship "Arcadia."

I will not descend to descriptions of life aboard a troop-ship in the tropics. Those who have made such a journey will have a vivid enough recollection of the steaming ovens known as mess-decks; the cooler but crowded upper regions; and the nights when you could not find among the fifteen hundred blanketed forms sufficient sleeping space for the most modest sardine, and yet dreaded to face a sweat-drenched hammock in the nethermost levels. What though a hobnail-booted gentleman mutilated your bare toe, and all your bones ached with malaria, so long as the Southern Cross gleamed out ahead and pointed homewards. No sorrows had been as your sorrows, and no joys like those to which every turn of the propeller was hurrying you. It might be for good, or merely for a couple of months that home would know you. East Africa, Flanders, Mesopotamia or garrison duty might claim you for the next great adventure. There would be plenty of time for such reflections later, and the good soldier lives in the present or the very near future.

But whether you had signed on for one campaign or for the duration of the war; whether you were sick and tired of fighting or still felt mildly bloodthirsty; even then maybe you heard a still, small voice bidding you throw not off your well-worn harness till there is peace upon earth, and victory has sounded the "Dismiss" to every long safari.

THE END.

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